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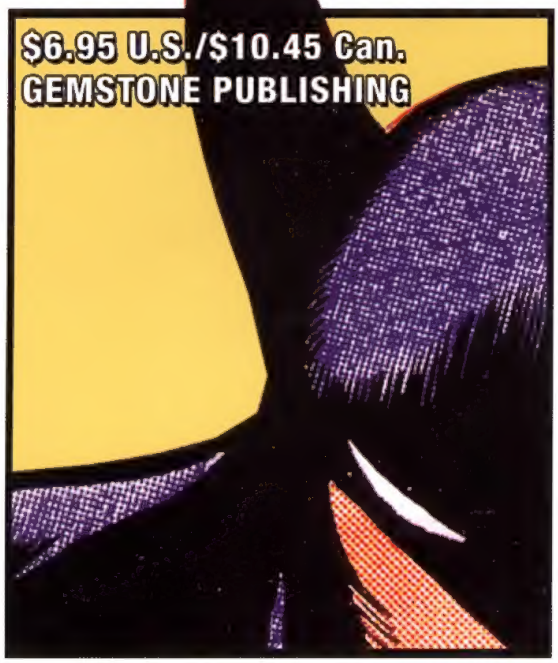
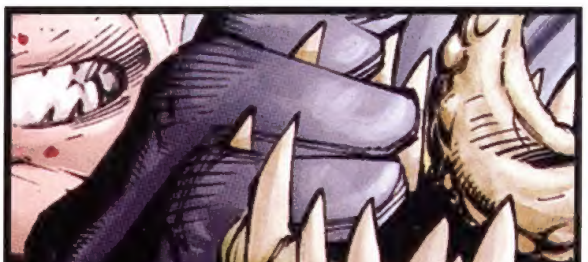




CELEBRATING 65 Years of The BAT MAN

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

A GEMSTONE PUBLICATION

Vol. 3 No. 104 July 2003

FEATURES

17 **Professor William H. Foster III on Blacks in Comics**
Interview by **Jennifer M. Contino**

19 **The Rediscovered Schwartz**
Lew Sayre Schwartz, Batman penciller, by **Will Murray**

26 **The Many Phases of Batman**
From 1973 and into the future, by **Chris Lambert**

33 **CBM Presents a Batman Timeline**
Batman 1939-2003, designed by **Michael Kronenberg**

40 **CBM Interview: Neal Adams**
Batman's gritty realist, interview by **Michael Kronenberg**

44 **Loeb and Lee: Batman Forever?**
Interview by **Jennifer M. Contino**

COLUMNS

10 **Nolan's Notebook**
Ghost-Breaker, DC's haunting star, by **Michelle Nolan**

14 **The Greatest Comic Book Ever**
A Strip Man makes his pick, by **Shel Dorf**

15 **Inspiration Central: Frank Miller**
Interview by **Bill Baker**

71 **The Michael Naiman Report**
Data, Data, Data, by **Michael Naiman**

72 **CBM MarketWatch and Market Reports**
Sampling marketplace indicator sales, compiled by **Michael Naiman**

78 **That Wonderful Year**
This month it's 1945, by **Michelle Nolan**

DEPARTMENTS

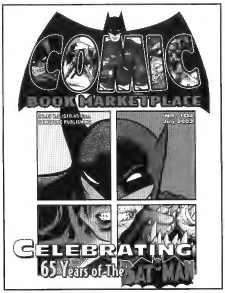
6 **Marketplace Mail**

18 **Back Issue Department**

69 **Collectable Character Statues**
Shadow of the Bat, by **Mike Wilbur**

80 **Advertising & Subs**

COVER:
The four phases of Batman's art: Bob Kane, Dick Sprang, Neal Adams, and Jim Lee.
Batman TM & © DC Comics. Used with permission.



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The Access Road

"When I was a kid, we had it pretty rough!" How many times have you heard an old-timer like me say that? Well, it's true! I can recall when the first *Batman* serial was playing at my local theater, and of course I wouldn't miss an episode, even sitting through most of them twice. But once I was too sick to go to the movies and Mom made me stay home, causing me to miss one of the Batman chapters. It was terrible, not knowing what happened in that episode, and there was no way I could find that chapter to see what I had missed. I had missed it forever!

I recall another time when I was in high school and reading EC comics. I was obsessive about it, even then, and when I happened to miss an issue of *The Haunt of Fear* (my favorite, because of "Ghastly") there was no way I could think of to find that missing issue. If one of my friends had it, I could trade for it, but no, they didn't—maybe that issue never even made it to West Plains! And so I also missed that issue forever, or at least until the 1960s when I started collecting ECs again.

My point here is that I had no *access* to that missing Batman chapter or that missing issue of *Haunt*. There was no comic shop or Howard Rogofsky to go to to find it. As far as I knew, it was lost and gone forever.

I have mentioned before that I never enjoyed Alex Raymond's wonderful *Flash Gordon* Sunday pages, because all of his great ones were done before 1940 and I didn't start reading the Sunday funnies until about 1941 or 1942. There was no way to go back and read those great strips from 1935 and 1936—there was no *access* to these newspaper strips which were published a couple of years before I was born.

Contrast that with the situation today: Hundreds of vintage comic books and Sunday pages are available in high-quality reprints. The *EC Library*, the *Carl Barks Library*, the *DC Archives*, and so on, have preserved all these treasures for future generations. The old movie serials are available on videotape, all the old radio shows can be found on audio tape, and stores like Borders have huge sections devoted to old radio shows.

And then, there's the Internet! Kids (of any age) today can sit down and "Google" to find out things about the Yellow Kid and Buster Brown, they can find radio shows featuring Frank Sinatra or Chet Atkins, or learn about Roy Rogers or Hoppy. There seems to be no limit to what you can find. The access is virtually unlimited.

Through the Internet, I can read Tarzan stories that were serialized in newspapers 80 years ago! I can find the Tarzan radio shows that aired long before I was born! I can read the earliest *Gasoline Alley* strips going back to 1921 when Skeezix was found on Walt's doorstep! I can find silent movies like *The Birth of a Nation* and *Metropolis* and the 1918 version of *Tarzan of the Apes*.

And because of this unlimited access, I have discovered treasures in all these areas of collecting, and, even better, comic strips and comic books now have an almost infinite lifetime. The EC comics that I loved so much as a teenager are now available to all future generations of comic book fans. They have been granted "eternal life" through EC reprints and EC fan activity like Grant Geissman's *Tales of Terror* book and Roger Hill's great articles for this magazine. May they live on forever!

Russ Cochran
Editor and Publisher

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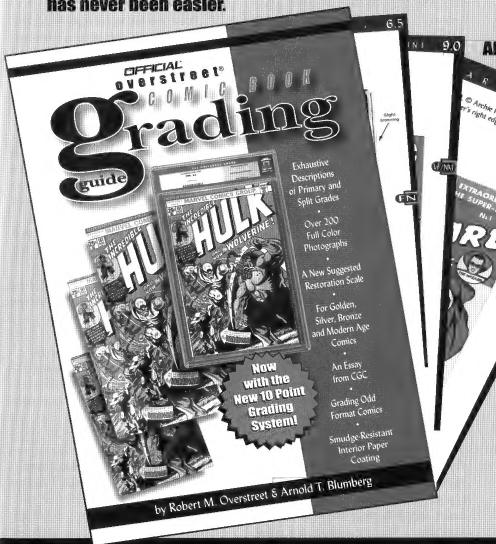

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Marketplace Mail

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Here's an idea, and another, and—

Congratulations on the 100th issue of *CBM*. The cover had me worried it was going to be another issue filled with articles about comics and subjects I already knew about, it turned out to be one of the best of recent times. The article on Funnyman was just about perfect: a well defined subject, lots of hitherto unknown facts and ample illustrations. If there ever is going to be a book in paperback with the best of *CBM* (in the vein of *All In Color For A Dime*, collecting the best for new readers, the larger public and posterity) this one is sure to be in it. Not surprisingly it was written by one of the medium's best historians, R.C. Harvey.

Another writer who has always delivered is Will Murray and his in-depth look into the "Pulp Roots of Batman" was thoughtful and insightful. When so much has been written about a popular character such as the Dark Knight, it is hard to be fresh about it and deliver new information, but this article comes through on all accounts. These days, two of those articles are more than enough to justify the $10 it costs me to get an issue (being a foreigner). Unfortunately, the score isn't always that high. It's not that I don't want to read about 'new areas of collecting' as you say (although statues really is stretching it for me), it's that I have been collecting comics for 25 years now and reading about them for the same time. So I have little need for introductory articles about George Evans, Johnny Craig, Joe Kubert, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, George Perez, Hal Foster, Milton Caniff or Alex Raymond. Nor do I need previews of books that I have already ordered, such as the Curt Swan book or the Hal Foster book. In fact, your consistent hammering on the notion that resistance to such articles is due to reader's reluctance to read about something else than the normal fare, is slightly insulting. I'd love to read about any number of newspaper subjects if they display the same inventiveness as the articles about pockets of Golden and Silver Age comics history in the magazine's previous incarnation.

To suggest a few topics: how about spotlighting the newspaper strip work of comic book artists from the fifties and sixties? Have Ron Goulart (another one of those great comic book historians) do a piece about Tom Cooke, who worked for Atlas in the fifties, as well as creating two sf strips for the newspapers in the fifties and late sixties (*Drift Marlo*) and working on the *Gene Autry* strip in the late fifties (and judging from his artwork for *Drift Marlo*, it wouldn't surprise me if he ghosted on John Prentice's *Rip Kirby* or Don Sherman's *Dan Flagg*). For all I know he may be still alive and available for an interview. Or how about tracking down Gene Deitch and talking to him about his innovative strip *Terr'ble Thompson* and his impressive career as an animator. I'd love to see an article on Tony DiPreta, who did some great work for Atlas in the fifties as well, before taking over *Joe Palooka* and slowly making his style one of the most bland in the newspapers. Over the last few years several newspaper try-out strips by Winslow Mortimer surfaced on eBay, which show how the Superman and Batman artist tried for years to get out of comics, before landing his own strip with *David Crane*. He'd be a great subject for an article or interview as well. And how about Jerry Robinson, who wrote the magnificent history of comic strip art *The Comics* in 1974, but whose own work with Mort Meskin in the forties, his war stories for Atlas in the early fifties and his early fifties space race strip *Jet Scott* are barely covered anywhere. Mike Roy, Irv Novick, Bob Lubbers and Bob Oksner are other artists who went back and forth between comics and strips. By writing about them, you can tell as much about the history of newspaper strips as by covering the greats for the umpteenth time, while actually unearthing some new facts for the reader. Because that is why I still read *Comic Book Marketplace* after all these years... to read about new aspects from the comics of the past. That's why I adore anything Michelle Nolan writes, why I enjoy Pat Calhoun's descriptions of comics I do not collect myself, why I laugh at Scott Shaw's Oddballs. And I am sure that if you try to lure new readers to the magazine by covering modern comics or by offering beginner courses in comic history, I think you are on the wrong track. Where *Comic Book Artist* is about the personal, *Comic Book Marketplace* should be about the thrill and the excitement of the unknown... from any period of comic art.

Ger Apeldoorn
The Netherlands

Thanks, Ger. You should like issue 103, with its features on European Disney comics. See CBM *#90 for a nice article on Bob Lubbers by Alberto Beccatini.*

RC

UK okay

I hope I find you well! I have just finished reading *CBM* 100. I'm very impressed, best issue for awhile, looking forward to more of the same in future issues!

I was very interested in your question regarding British reprints of American strips and also original British strips. As a dealer in both (as well as American) I can

quite honestly say that the market for these issues is a sleeping monster! If you have the time it could be worth your while checking out my auctions on eBay (current and finished items use ID = paulschambers@heeb.net) to see the kind of stuff I've been selling. Prices have gone ballistic, especially on the Alan Class 64+ page b/w reprint material.

These contain old Atlas/ACG/Marvel/Charlton, etc., and are best loved for their Kirby/Ditko reprints, although there is now a huge market for the Williamson/Wood/Torres, etc., strips too! Even though these are reprints they do have a particular charm all their own and are still only reaching maybe less than 1% of their potential customers worldwide. I have customers everywhere after the *Phantom* reprints, especially the covers as an example.

Apart from Alan Class reprints, the very scarce and better quality are the reprints by Miller, there are hundreds and many have pre-Code horror strips including EC!

I could go on for hours but I should be working! How about an article on *2000 AD*? The first 200 issues are highly sought after worldwide with prices going sky high. Overstreet will never list prices or info for these and with Dredd being their hottest character outside the States I believe it would be very popular in *CBM*! Also, Alan Moore UK only printed strips; there are loads. I cannot get enough copies to meet demand. If I had 20 of each it wouldn't even cover my UK customers.

Anyway, I hope this is of interest to you and any article on British stuff would be highly appreciated. If you would like more info from me, please just ask!

I'm sure Gary Carter's UK Superman Annual article went a storm plus the *Planet of the Apes* issue had a great UK bit, although very small. How about an article of the UK 1970s four issues of *Vampirella*—they are red hot!!

Paul Chambers
via e-mail

Well, readers, what do you say? Do you want to see articles about British comics?

RC

Sparky and The Spider

Thank you for sending *Comic Book Marketplace* #100. The Will Murray article on the pulp origins of Batman mentions The Spider and the feature novel, *Death Reign of the Vampire King*, from the November 1935 issue of *The Spider* magazine.

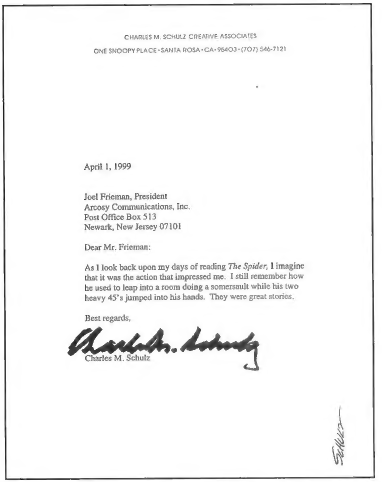
October 2003 will mark the 70th anniversary of The Spider and *Death Reign of the Vampire King* will be reprinted in facsimile commemorating the occasion with a new full color cover penciled by Carmine Infantino and inked by Dick Giordano.

Herewith is a copy of a letter from an avid fan of The Spider.

Joel Frieman
Newark, NJ

Yes, kids who grew up in the '20s, '30s and '40s, especially, were usually fans of comic strips, radio shows, pulp magazines, movies, including serials, and these all blended together in the kid's mind. A kid who loved to read the Tarzan stories by Edgar Rice Burroughs would also want to see the Tarzan movies and serials and listen to the Tarzan radio shows and read the Tarzan comics in the Sunday paper, and a creator like ERB had to make sure their characters were treated equally in all these media. Still, there were minor differences: Tarzan's monkey friend N'Kima (in the books and pulps) became a chimp named Cheta in the movies, Tarzan's son Jack, also known as Korak, was called "Boy" in the Johnny Weissmuller movies, and so on.

RC



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April 1, 1999

Joel Frieman, President
Arcosy Communications, Inc.
Post Office Box 513
Newark, New Jersey 07101

Dear Mr. Frieman:

As I look back upon my days of reading *The Spider*, I imagine that it was the action that impressed me. I still remember how he used to leap into a room doing a somersault while his two heavy 45's jumped into his hands. They were great stories.

Best regards,

Charles M. Schulz

"A euphonius appelation"

I just bought a copy of *CBM* #100. Congratulations on making it to this publishing milestone.

I have to comment, though, that recent issues of *CBM* have been very disappointing. I bought my first issue of *CBM* several years ago. I can't remember the issue number, but I was drawn to the great cover which featured the Adam Strange *Mystery in Space* comics. I had collected these as a kid and have been lucky to have them survive through the years. Since then I have been buying every issue of *CBM* and hunting in stores and on-line auctions for back issues. I realize that you want to broaden the scope of *CBM*, but I think you need to remember that your core readership most likely began buying *CBM* because of an interest in Gold, Silver, and Bronze Age comics. Please remember that the name of your magazine is *Comic* ***Book*** *Marketplace*, not *Comic Strip Marketplace*, or *Comic Toy Marketplace*, or *Comic Statue Marketplace*. I realize

one of your own main interests lies in comic strips, but I think I can safely say that the majority of *CBM* readers have comic books as their main interest. Too many recent issues have had an emphasis on comic strips, with only token mention of comic books. I always looked forward to each new issue of *CBM*, but lately I haven't bought several of the issues because of lack of interest in the content. I was fortunate to be able to find a collection of the six wonderful quarterly magazines published back in 1993-94 by Gary Carter that were a prelude to the return of *CBM*. If you have a chance, please give those a read. Hundreds of pages of great reading about Gold, Silver, and Bronze Age comic books. That is what *CBM* should be about. If you want to mix in an occasional article about comic strips, toys, or statues, please feel free, but please remember the name of your magazine.

David Brankow
via e-mail

David, now that I have satisfied my own desires to cover artists like Foster, Raymond and Caniff, and since Bob Harvey's articles in "Funnies Farrago" (usually about strips) have come to an end, the pendulum is starting to swing back in the direction you prefer. This is not to say that there will be no articles about comic strips in the future—I'm sure there will be—but for the time being we are swinging back to heavier coverage of comic books.

RC

He did the Mouse

First of all, I'd like to congratulate you on the 100th issue of *CBM* that I have just got at my local comics shop. An excellent issue indeed, and the R. C. Harvey article on Funnyman is a special treat for us syndicated-strip buffs!

I read Steve Gauthier's letter, and although I'm used to accepting any kind of criticism, I just can't understand how he can affirm that in my article on Disney syndicated strips "the importance of individual contributions ended up buried under a flood of useless data." Well, I would certainly like to write specific articles on Floyd Gottfredson (actually, I wrote a *book* about him) or any other Disney artist, but the aim of the article, crammed as it was with data, was exactly to give a general overview of Disney syndicated strips, and I do understand that such an intensive effort may not be satisfactory for those who—as Mr. Gauthier—don't care so much about the who's who and which is which in comics history. I just hope that somebody *has* appreciated my article—including you, who had the benevolence to run it in your magazine.

I wish you and all the *CBM* staff all the very best. Your friend,

Alberto Becattini
Firenze, Italy

Archie aether

Great issue [#101] on Archie Comics! Short shrift on the radio show, though. Enclosed: a page out of *Radio's Golden Years* (self-published 1998) by Frank Bresee and Bobb Lynes. Hal Stone and Bob Hastings are still with us—and active.

The book is chock-full of comics-to-radio pages!

Bobb Lynes
Pasadena, CA

RADIO'S GOLDEN YEARS
by FRANK BRESEE & BOBB LYNES
ARCHIE ANDREWS
CREATED AND DRAWN BY BOB MONTANA,
ARCHIE ANDREWS WAS RIGHT OUT OF THE COMIC PAGES!
THE POPULAR NEWSPAPER STRIP CAME TO RADIO IN 1943 ON THE BLUE NETWORK AS A 15-MINUTE FIVE-A-WEEK AFTER-NOON TEENAGE SHOW. IT IS BEST REMEMBERED, HOWEVER, AS A 30-MINUTE SATURDAY MORNING FEATURE ON NBC, ENDING IN 1955. AS IN THE STRIP, THE RADIO SERIES FEATURED THE FUNNY EXPERIENCES OF A GROUP OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE TOWN OF RIVERDALE.
OVER THE YEARS ARCHIE WAS PLAYED BY... CHARLES MULLEN, JACK GRIMES, BURT BOYER, BOB HASTINGS & JAMES DOBSON
BLUE
NBC
JACK GRIMES
HARLAN HALSTONE
GLORIA MANN
Miracle Whip
Swift's Premium
ALICE YOURMAN
VIVIAN SMOLEN
"VERONICA"- GLORIA MANN, VIVIAN SMOLEN
ROSEMARY RICE
BOB HASTINGS
"BETTY"- DORIS GRUNDY, ROSEMARY RICE
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ANNOUNCERS: KENNETH BANGHART, DICK DUDLEY, ROBERT WARREN
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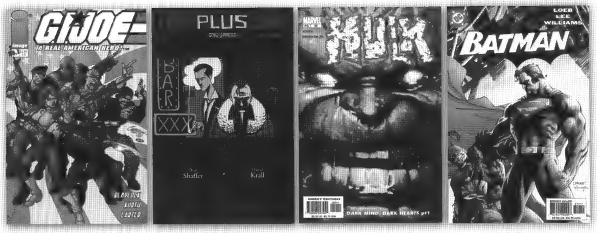
Jones '02

Thanks, Bobb! The cross-fertilization between vintage comics and vintage radio shows was considerable, like the Lone Ranger *radio show which preceded the comics. Archie, as we know, started in the comics and then went to radio. Here is Bobb's address for anyone interested in ordering his book* Radio's Golden Years*: Box 561, So. Pasadena CA 91031.*

RC



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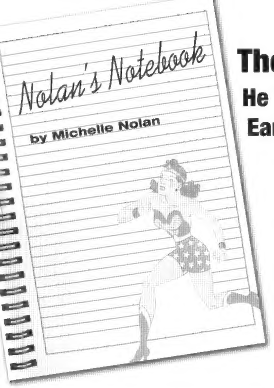


The Ghost-Breaker Was No Bust

He Was the Haunting Star of Nine of DC's Best Early 1950s Stories

The Ghost-Breaker remains one of the most overlooked and underrated characters in the literary limbo that was DC Comics in the early 1950s.

The creative adventures of Dr. Thirteen, aka Terry Thirteen, aka The Ghost-Breaker, ran for nine plot-packed 8-page stories and also were featured on the covers of *Star Spangled Comics* #122-130 in 1951-52.

He was born of DC's multi-pronged attempts to recapture some of the kids who were no longer haunting the newsstands. In the wake of the demise of so many of the company's super-heroes, National Comics (DC) was never more versatile—some might say never more desperate—than it was in the period following the last Golden Age appearance of the Justice Society of America in *All Star Comics* #57 (Feb/Mar 1951).

During 1951 and 1952, no company—including Timely/Atlas—produced more different kinds of comic books than did DC. Good comic books, too, especially considering the sheer volume of the company's output.

There were still the classic super-heroes, along with comics featuring funny animals, teen humor, television and movie character adaptations, romance, war, crime, spy/mystery, western, frontier, science fiction—and horror.

Well, let's call it horror lite. Who ya gonna call? The Ghost-Breaker—for the last nine issues of *Star Spangled Comics*, #122 (Nov 1951) through #130 (Jul 1952), before the company gave up The Ghost-Breaker and converted his title into *Star Spangled War Stories*.

While *House of Mystery* #1 (Dec 1951/Jan 1952) is properly credited as DC's first horror comic, in a sense the honor really should go to *Star Spangled* #122, which made the cover-feature transition from Tomahawk to The Ghost-Breaker. Just as lots of young readers thought of *Action* as a Superman comic or *Detective* as a Batman comic, *Star Spangled* became a "horror comic" with the arrival of Dr. Thirteen.

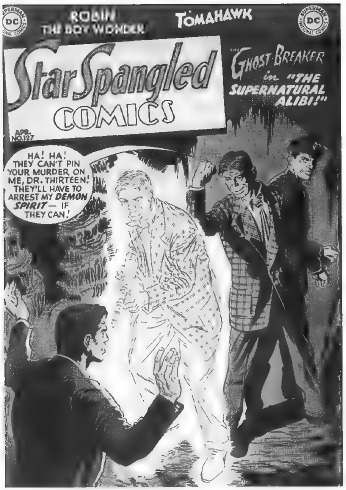
Unfortunately, The Ghost-Breaker was doomed. He was fated to less than a year. DC editor-in-chief Whitney Ellsworth was not a fan of either the supernatural or gratuitous violence. Neither, apparently, were the other powers-that-were at DC, who killed off all but one of DC's horror titles in the wake of Ellsworth's departure in 1953 for Hollywood to supervise the incredibly successful *Superman* television show. Ellsworth, in fact, was the one who did so much to tone down the violence of the syndicated *Superman* show beginning with the second season in 1953-54 (episodes #27-52) after Robert Maxwell supervised the first 26 shows.

By 1953, horror comics, especially EC's inimitable variety, had come under an increasing barrage of criticism, leading in 1954 to Senate sub-committee hearings, Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* and the creation of the Comics Code Authority.

By the time the Code was created, though, DC needed to make only the most minor adjustments. Long gone were two wonderful characters with names that probably wouldn't have passed

ROBIN
THE BOY WONDER
TOMAHAWK
Another EERIE ADVENTURE WITH THE GHOST-BREAKER
Star Spangled COMICS
"The DOLLS of DOOM!"
AND NOW, DR. THIRTEEN, WHEN I PIERCE THIS WAX IMAGE OF YOU, YOU WILL DIE— LIKE THE OTHERS!

Star Spangled #123 (Dec 1951)


ROBIN
THE BOY WONDER
TOMAHAWK
Star Spangled COMICS
GHOST-BREAKER in "THE SUPERNATURAL ALIBI!"
HA! HA! THEY CAN'T PIN YOUR MURDER ON ME, DR. THIRTEEN! THEY'LL HAVE TO ARREST my DEMON SPIRIT — IF THEY CAN!

Star Spangled #127 (Apr 1954) Scarce

muster with the Comics Code—The Ghost-Breaker and The Phantom Stranger, who first appeared immediately after The Ghost-Breaker vanished. Incidentally, The Phantom Stranger's logo looked very much the same as The Ghost-Breaker's logo.

But in 1951, DC indeed decided to try horror lite. The company started *House of Mystery* and concurrently converted *Sensation Comics* to a weird mystery title beginning with #107 (Jan/Feb 1952), leaving longtime *Sensation* bellwether Wonder Woman with only her own title.

Unlike Wonder Woman in *Sensation*, though, Tomahawk remained in *Star Spangled Comics* along with solo stories featuring Robin, the Boy Wonder. But

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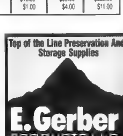

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Tomahawk, who had been the cover feature of *Star Spangled* for 26 consecutive issues (#96-121), gave way to The Ghost-Breaker as the cover feature of the last nine issues.

A case could be made, though, that The Ghost-Breaker may have led to frightening sales. Over the years, I have noticed that all of those last nine issues of *Star Spangled* definitely seem to be scarcer than the earlier issues with Tomahawk covers. The *Gerber Photo-Journal* gives them 4s except for a 5 for #130, but I would give them all 5s and 6s, and probably a 7 for #130.

Have you ever seen a *Star Spangled* #130? By the way, a case could be made that this was DC's last Golden Age comic since it was the final solo appearance of Robin (Batman appeared in the final two panels to offer congratulations).

At any rate, The Ghost-Breaker deserved a longer life. Perhaps DC felt he was too similar to the "Impossible But True" feature starring hoax detector Roy Raymond, a long-running backup feature in *Detective Comics*. In fact, Captain Compass—a backup feature in *Star Spangled* #83-130 except for #122, yet nowhere near as well done as The Ghost-Breaker—was shifted to *Detective* #203 (Jan 1954) through #224 (Oct 1955), except for #206. Yet The Ghost-Breaker strip was far superior to Captain Compass.

By the way, here's a great trivia question: Which strip did DC ditch to make room for Manhunter from Mars? That's right, it was Captain Compass—a decision that showed DC was definitely guided in the right Silver Age direction.

"I Talked With the Dead" was the title of Ghost-Breaker's origin story in *Star Spangled* #122. In this tale, we meet Terry Thirteen's fiancée, the hauntingly beautiful Marie Leeds, who accompanied him on each of his nine adventures. The story tells how young Terry Thirteen was deliberately given a 13-letter name in order to help his father continue to disabuse the world of the notion of the family's historic "Curse of Thirteen."

Terry Thirteen's father felt he had proved that the deaths of so many of his ancestors were not based in the supernatural but rather caused by sound scientific discoveries, which were confused with witchcraft and sorcery by earlier generations. In addition, the father made his teen-age son promise to appear five years after the elder Thirteen's death, to determine if the dead could indeed communicate with the living.

Those five years came sooner than Terry Thirteen wanted, because his father died in a car crash—the latest victim of the curse, or so the community believed. When he grew to young adulthood, Terry Thirteen established himself as The Ghost-Breaker and even debunked a clever recording-machine plan that Marie and his father concocted. "Your father planned all this—made the recording you heard tonight before his death—to prove to you that the 'supernatural' can always be traced to natural causes," Marie explained.

Setting a pattern for clever denouements in every story, Dr. Thirteen noticed that there were spiders, but no cobwebs, in the clock where it turned out the recording machine of his father's voice was hidden. But The Ghost-Breaker still could not help wondering, as the story ended, if a violent death was also to be his fate.

This story set the style for virtually all of DC's horror lite stories, in which the supernatural was consistently debunked in nifty ways by the end of the tale. Unlike in the five-year flood of horror comics from other companies before the coming of the Comics Code, there were no real vampires, werewolves or zombies in DC comics. Or at least I can't remember any.

A full-page house ad for *House of Mystery* #1—which cover-featured the wonderfully-titled "Wanda Was a Werewolf"—appeared on the inside back cover of *Star Spangled* #122. In addition, *House of Mystery* appeared for the first time in the list of DC comics that appeared in almost every issue from the company through early 1955.

Star Spangled #123 (Dec 1951) was the only back issue with a Ghost-Breaker adventure that I discovered as a child. I remember being fascinated by the purple cover, which featured Dr. Thirteen and Marie facing down a madman about to plunge a deadly needle into a wax image of The Ghost-Breaker. Wow—this was great stuff! This haunting image is still my favorite of the nine Ghost-Breaker covers. "The Dolls of Doom," however,

ROBIN
THE BOY WONDER And TOMAHAWK
Star Spangled COMICS
Featuring Ghost-Breaker in "The HUMAN ORCHIDS!"
GROW, MY BEAUTIES! YOU ARE BLOSSOMING INTO THE RAREST FLOWERS ON EARTH!

Star Spangled #129 (Jun 1952) Great cover!

turned out to be created not before but after the deaths of their supposed victims as part of a blackmail scheme during Dr. Thirteen's visit to Hollywood to make some films of his work. Instead of an Oscar™, though, he leaves with his wax doll and Marie in tow.

"Suicide Tower!" in #124 dealt creatively with a scheme involving an Aztec tower in Mexico. "The Hermit's Ghost Dog!" in #125 debunked a fake fade-away Fido deep in a forest. "The Phantom of Paris!" in #126 told a tale of French footlight follies committed by a frustrated opera composer. "The Supernatural Alibi!" in #127 revealed the way Dr. Thirteen exposed how a criminal could project an "astral image" from an iron lung.

That leads us to "The Girl Who Lived 5,000 Years!" in #128, one of the best stories in any DC comic from 50 or so years ago. Dr. Thirteen unveils the hoax of a beguiling, bewitching sorceress named Tateeka, who supposedly comes to life for 30 days every 100 years while getting her beauty sleep the rest of the time while in suspended animation in a mummy case. In this little weirdie, Tateeka causes the deaths of three handsome bachelors after driving them mad, leading Dr. Thirteen to try to pin her down to a genuine date, so to speak (sorry). "Terry, you should not have come!" Tateeka says. "Tomorrow is our date, and…oh, dear!…a run in my hose! See what you've done!"

It turns out that Tateeka's father is being held hostage in mysterious Lamson Manor and she was being forced to use drugs on the fingers of her gloves. But Dr. Thirteen cracks the case of the mummy-bound woman because, as he explains, "When I talked it over with Marie, we uncovered the real clue…Tateeka had complained of a run in her stocking…only a modern girl would do that!" Indeed! Dr. Thirteen was a bit dense, though, to need Marie's help with that mystery!

Dr. Thirteen's penultimate adventure was "The Human Orchids!" in #129. It's all a hoax, of course, led by a mad scientist who gets gobbled up by one of his other plants. There was nothing supernatural about it, but the grisly death of even such a creative meanie wasn't allowed in the early post-Code comics.

Star Spangled #130 (Jul 1952) Scarce last issue.

It's interesting to observe that the striking cover—the only one that does not include Dr. Thirteen himself—features two green "orchidwomen" and one "orchidman." The fellow's green chest is bare, but the women's breasts are demurely covered by orchid leaves that conveniently give them higher necklines.

Dr. Thirteen didn't even make it to 13 stories—he bowed out with his ninth adventure in #130, "The Haunted Town." It's the well-told tale of yet another hoax involving a supposedly cursed 13th Street and a superstitious city. There's a nifty scene at the end where The Ghost-Breaker saves himself from being crushed by a mountain of falling books in a library.

Looking back, it seems strange that DC did not continue the adventures of Dr. Thirteen in *Sensation Mystery*, which began its seven-issue run with #110 (Jul/Aug 1952) after the final three issues of *Sensation Comics* (#107-109) were converted to a weird mystery format. Johnny Peril, who deserves a column of his own, starred in all ten issues but was the only continuing character. I can't help but wonder if Dr. Thirteen might have been a welcome addition. *Sensation Mystery* ended with #116 (Jul/Aug 1953), the same time as *Phantom Stranger* bowed out with #6 (Jun/Jul 1953).

Nor did DC take advantage of the opportunity to place Dr. Thirteen in *House of Mystery*, which became tamer and tamer in its first three years, although the title was apparently a rousing commercial success. DC added *Tales of the Unexpected* and *House of Mystery* in 1956, one year after *My Greatest Adventure* debuted in a conventional format but soon became the company's fourth weird-mystery title.

Unlike the first Dr. Thirteen issue in *Star Spangled* #122, which gave *House of Mystery* #1 such a big plug, the last Dr. Thirteen story in #130 neither listed nor advertised *Phantom Stranger* #1 (Aug/Sep 1952), which came out concurrently with #130 in the same manner that *House of Mystery* #1 hit the stands at nearly the same time as #122.

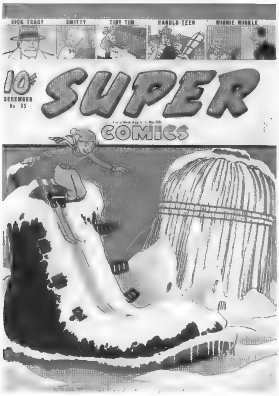
That turned out to be the final *Star Spangled* mystery involving The Ghost-Breaker.

A Strip Man's Pick of Comics

I can't recall the issue number, but it had to be in 1944 because that was the year I discovered *Dick Tracy* in the Sunday funnies. The book I refer to is *Super Comics*. I'd bought comic books before that, but *Super* was a different sort of comic. Instead of the usual original comic heroes and cartoon books, this one reproduced *newspaper* comics. And old ones at that. *Super* featured strips from the Chicago Tribune Syndicate. There were at least four pages of each different strip. They led off with *Dick Tracy* (I could read old stories I'd been too young to read up to then, especially ones about the infamous villains I'd only seen pictures of). *Little Orphan Annie*, *Smitty*, *Brenda Starr*, *Harold Teen*, *Tiny Tim*, *Winnie Winkle*, *Clyde Beatty*, *Moon Mullins* and *Magic Morro* (a jungle man adventure drawn by Ken Ernst, who was my favorite *Mary Worth* artist).There were 68 pages full of great entertainment. All for one thin dime! The only disadvantage was that the story strips were continued in the next issue! At the time I bought that first issue of *Super Comics* they had two different monthly issues on the rack—they'd forgotten to pull the old issue. I bought them both!

Shel Dorf at, age, 6 holding his first comic book, Sure-Fire Comics #1 (June 1940). Flanked by cousin Dorothy and Aunt Ida, Grandma Dorf in background. PHOTO by his late, great dad, BEN DORF.

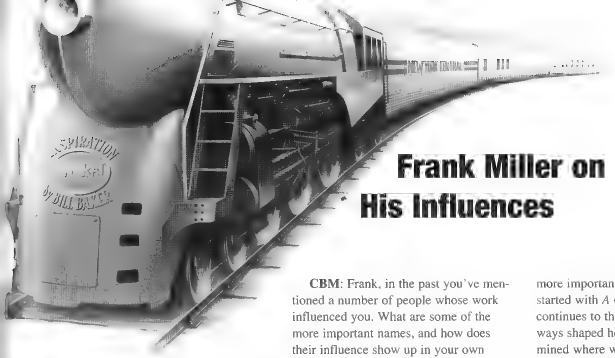
As most drug stores did, they put a mark on the cover to help them remember which issues were old and needed to be returned to the distributor. This had to be done to make way for the new batch. In my mind's eye I can still feel the excitement of going up to the shelf to spot new books. Gad! The cover art was spectacular! Irresistible! It took a long time for us to decide which one to buy! So we stood there for half an hour thumbing through each book that caught our eye until the clerk yelled, "Hey, kid! This ain't no library! Choose the one you want to buy!"



Super was not as popular as the other books, so they only ordered a couple of copies. As I was soon collecting successive issues, it was important to be at the drug store the day the bundles of periodicals arrived. On the way home from school I'd always stop at the drug store (to have a soda or whatever—remember those Coca Cola chests filled with ice and floating soda bottles?). Once in a while they had not put out the new mags and I sat and waited while the guy clipped the wire that held the bundles together. I'd even help the guy put up the new comics because by then I was a regular. I was there to get the new *Super Comics* before it sold out. If I missed an issue, my dad would drive me to another drug store until I found a copy. I suppose things are still that way, except we now have comic book stores and nobody hustles you to buy!

After a while I realized there was a companion mag to *Super Comics* called *Popular Comics*. *Popular* carried Caniff's fabulous *Terry and the Pirates*, *Smilin' Jack*, *Smokey Stover*, *Gang Busters*, *Don Winslow of the Navy*, *Ben Webster's Career*, *The Gumps*, *The Owl*,

[continued on page 77]



Frank Miller on His Influences

Interview by Bill Baker

He's simultaneously one of the most celebrated and controversial creators working in comics today, something which should come as no surprise to those who've followed his career for the past several decades. Whether he was breathing new life into then-fading icons like Daredevil and Batman, exploring the depths of the human soul and psyche in creator-owned titles like Sin City, *or speaking his mind on the subject of Hollywood and* Wizard *magazine, Frank Miller has acted as a lightning rod for conflicting opinions among fans, retailers and his fellow professionals almost from the moment he first entered the field.*

Still, it's quite easy to forget amidst all this history, and the still-dying hoopla surrounding his long-awaited Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again! *mini-series, that Miller loves the medium of comics. He also has an incredibly deep and true appreciation and understanding of the seminal work of the past giants in the field, a fact that too often gets ignored by both his detractors and supporters when discussing his work.*

Here, with his typical candor and flair for the dramatic, Miller gives a few of those giants who have had a real impact on his work their due.

CBM: Frank, in the past you've mentioned a number of people whose work influenced you. What are some of the more important names, and how does their influence show up in your own work?

Frank Miller: Well, that's what I like, a narrow question! [General laughter]

In comics, the names are all pretty well known of the people who most deeply affected me. Predominant, I'd have to say Will Eisner, because, beyond the *obvious* things that I was able to pick up from Will, and learn from Will—the staging, and the lighting, and all of that—there's an overall sense of *purpose* of the medium as a story medium, above all else, that he brought to it, from when he was very young, doing *The Spirit*, but more importantly, from the work that he started with *A Contract with God*, and continues to this day, he's in so many ways shaped how comics are, and determined where we can go.

When *Contract with God* came out, I was one of a number of cartoonists who were simply *stunned* by the audacity of it, and how well it worked. I determined at that point that my works would not be simply magazines that came and went in a month, but would be things that would have permanent editions, and, more important, that would be *worthy* of permanent editions, if I was capable of making them so. And that lead to me doing *Ronin*, which I always envisioned as eventually being a proper book, rather than the six-issue series that it was. I got my dream come true with *Dark Knight [Returns]*, that was picked up by Warners and became a paperback, and then *Ronin* became one, and now virtually everything I've ever done is out—for better or worse—in a permanent edition.

I could name other artists [who have influenced me, as well]. I mean, *certainly* Jack Kirby affected *everything* about my storytelling. Neal Adams, personally, taught me a great deal when I came in as a hapless amateur in my teens to New York, and he was *amazingly* generous with his time. I guess there are two kinds of influences we're talking [about]. There are the direct, hands-on influences, a la Neal Adams, and *many* other people who would take time out [to help me]. Mine is a generous field. We look at aspiring people's portfolios. We consider ourselves complete pricks if we don't. And I was helped on the way in, that directly, by professionals, and try to do the same [thing for novices today]

myself.

Jumping back, the ones who taught me most by example were, as I said, Jack Kirby, because he's a pervasive force—you can't study the history of comics without looking at Jack Kirby no more than you would study the history of classical music without looking at Beethoven—he changed things fundamentally.

Gil Kane had an amazing way of taking Jack Kirby's seemingly intuitive approach to physicality and breaking it down with a coroner's skill into a stylization of *true* anatomy. He intellectualized the genius of Kirby and, in some ways, imbued it with that much more power. Johnny Craig remains one of my favorites, because he was able to bring so much emotion to the page, and so thoroughly terrorize [the reader]. And his black and white brush work was *so* sweet. You can't live in comics without talking about Milton Caniff. [And there are] so many others…

I guess the last name I'd really like to mention, in particular, is Wallace Wood, who not only did some of the most beautiful comic books ever done, and some of the most amazing and dramatic, but showed me one particular thing about the kind of cartooning [that] I like to do. I know I'm known for my stuff being spooky, for my stories being dark, but I try to make it a very *attractive* kind of dark. And what Wallace Wood showed was that you could take anything there is, and give it *glamour*. You'll forgive my language, but Wallace Wood could ink a dog turd and make it *beautiful*. His women were *better* than reality, the cars looked *great*, the *fork* someone would pick up would look *better* than a fork! As Bill Watterson did in *Calvin and Hobbes*, he brought the joy of drawing to *every image* on the page. *That's* what comics can offer that *cannot* be done by any other medium, and it's our specialty.

CBM: What about Kirby's approach to comics, specifically, has affected your own storytelling?

Miller: Kirby, in particular, is like watching a tsunami hit the medium. Almost irrational in it's fury. I referred to him as Beethoven, before. That might not have been the best comparison. Probably better to refer to him as D. W. Griffith. Because, everybody before Griffith, you dealt with a static camera, and Griffith just yanked it off the floor and showed you that movie pictures *moved*. There was no evidence that Kirby was overly analytical with what he did. I think even his most devout fans would agree that he crapped out as many bad ideas as he did good ones. I mean, he had a guy who turned into a car! He did some bad stuff.

But it was the sheer abundance, and exuberance of it, that made his work outstanding. He produced so much, for so long, and he created not just one trend, but at *least* three, in comics history. He brought back the super-hero, but, before that, he created the love comic and the western comic. And all of these were very much derived from the rest of media. His *Rawhide Kid* was not a study in the old west; it was a study in TV shows that were around then. But it had an *amazing* level of energy.

He was like a combination SWAT team-ER unit to the comics industry, every decade or so. And, up until he stopped working, his influence was *profound*.

[I'm] wandering all over the map here, but what it really gets back to, more than anything, is that he showed us that comic books weren't anybody else's sorry offspring. That comics were—Will did the same, but in a quieter way—that comics are their *own* thing, with their own dynamic. Jack Kirby's comics are *not* movies on paper, nor are Will Eisner's. Good comics are *not* movies on paper. Good comics are *comics*. The dynamics are different, the structure is different. As Will Eisner argues, rightly, comics owe more to prose than they do to film. But Kirby showed that there's a visual aspect to them that nobody had really ever imagined.

CBM: What were some of the more important things that Neal Adams taught you?

Miller: That's a good question, 'cause Neal Adams…

Oh, when I start [thinking about] what Neal Adams did for me, I've got to pause for a second to organize my thoughts, but the very *first* thing Neal Adams taught me, and one of the most *important* ones, I'll never forget. I came in with what I thought was just a *jolting* good crime comic that I was doing. It was amateur work, OK, and that was back when I had the absolute *arrogance* to think I could break into a super-hero comic book world with my crime comics. I didn't realize that I'd have to wait about 15, 20 years before I'd get to do them. [General laughter] And I'd drawn a scene in a tenement building that I really thought was just terrific. And he looked at it—Neal's a New Yorker, he doesn't mince words—he thought the storytelling was kinda nice, and he thought the work was utter garbage.

He proceeded to say to me, "What'd you look at? Where'd you get this drapery? Where'd you get this? Look at this tenement place. Where are the pipes in the walls?" And then he got to the punch line. He said, "Artists are people who know how things work." That artists are people who draw something because they *understand* it, not just because they see a photograph of it, not because they have an *impression* of it. And it seems so *obvious* now, but when I'm talking to novice artists, I so often have to say, "You're drawing shoes. Take your shoe off, put it on your board, and draw it. You're drawing people. Have your girlfriend sit down, have your friends sit down. Draw them." I was like a lot of the novices are these days, coming in, thinking that comic books were the source material. And, sure, you gotta study 'em. But the *real* world is, ultimately, the source, and you've got to get back to it, and know how things work. So, if you're going to betray that, you're going to do it *intentionally*.

Neal, to me, represented the triumph of reality, just as Wallace Wood was the triumph of glamour. But, I think, Wallace Wood would have said very much what Neal did."

Professor William H. Foster III

Interview conducted by
Jennifer M. Contino

Besides having the same secret identity as one of the characters in his exhibit, Black Goliath, Professor Bill Foster is currently an Associate Professor of English and Communication at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury, Connecticut. A long time comic book collector and researcher, Professor Foster has been an expert commentator for both CNN News and National Public Radio as well as a consultant on the history of Blacks in both comic strips and comic books for the Words and Pictures Museum of Fine Sequential Art in Northampton, MA. His exhibit on the "Changing Image of Blacks in Comics" has been displayed at a variety of venues across the country and he's currently working on a book to showcase the role of Blacks in comics. He took time out of his hectic schedule to answer some questions about these and other works for Comic Book Marketplace.

Comic Book Marketplace: What inspired you to create this exhibit?

Professor William Foster III: As a long time comic book reader and collector, (I started reading and collecting in the early 1960s) I have always wondered why comic books never showed anyone like me. I surely saw an occasional African, but never African Americans. Besides that, the Africans were always made to look stupid, silly or downright barbaric—no one anyone would want to emulate. So I began searching and studying what images of African Americans have been presented in comic books, and then going even further back, in comic strips. My search continues…

CBM: Who are some of the characters you spotlight in the exhibit?

Foster: Well, as many as I can, both the little seen to the more widely known; "Washwhite Jones" form the Young Allies series of the mid 1940s. "Ebony White" from the original *Spirit* comic strip and later comic books by Will Eisner. "Lil' Eightball" from the Walter Lantz comics. "Smokey, " the ringman from the original *Joe Palooka* comic books, and Rachel, the housekeeper/cook from the *Gasoline Alley* comic strip.

Then of course I have included a sampling from the 1960s and 1970s—Black Lightning, Black Goliath, Luke Cage, The Black Panther, Captain Marvel, Brother VooDoo, Blade and Richard "Grass" Green's "Soul Brother American."

I even have a large representation from the Black independent comic books—*Omega Man*, *Malcolm 10*, *Sistah Girl*, *Brotherman*, *Kids of the King*, *Chocolate Thunder* and *The L.A. Phoenix*. It's a pretty broad cross section.

CBM: What is in the exhibit—comics, action figures, books?

Foster: I receive a number of requests throughout the year to present my exhibit and until I put together a particular showcase of items, it stays in storage. As to what's in the exhibit—YES! That is to say that it is made up of comic books, posters, flyers, buttons, tee-shirts, trading cards (over 3000), action figures, models, key chains, you name it, I probably have it.

CBM: What research did you do to create the exhibit?

Foster: A fair question. The research came from a wide variety of research texts, web sites and personal contacts, many of the latter some of the top comic book researchers in the country. Needless to say, the research is ongoing. However, there is no one definitive resource book on the topic of Blacks in comics. That is, until I finish *my* book!

CBM: Would that be *Finally in Full Color*?

Foster: Yes, that's the title of my nearly completed text on the history of Black comic book creators. I trace the history of these intrepid writers and artists from the mid-1940s right up to the current day. This history has never been collected and/or documented before—my book will be the first.

CBM: Do you have a publisher interested in this book?

Foster: Actually a publisher approached me about doing the book—The University Press of Mississippi. And surprisingly, another publisher in Canada has approached me about another work I have done preliminary research on, "The Image of African Americans in Comics."

CBM: When do you anticipate the book being completed and available for purchase?

Foster: If all goes well, the book should be available some time in 2003.

CBM: What have been some of the biggest challenges to working on this book?

Foster: Actually, finding non-teaching time to write and locating research materials have been two of the biggest hurdles in completing this project. The first is a matter of setting priorities, but the second has been rougher still. It has been largely a matter of luck and persistence that has led me to some surprising finds. My network of comic book sellers, professionals and fans has really paid off. My "thanks" page in the book is going to be quite long!

CBM: What will be included in the book?

Foster: This book will include not only little known (and in some cases, unknown) facts about some of the earliest African American comic book creators, and copies of the work they produced. In some cases, this will be work that has not seen the light of day in years. I am very proud to pay tribute to these important creators. I will also include as complete a list as I can of all independent African American comic book creators—web sites, products, etc.

CBM: Speaking of African American creators, how long did it take you to gather the data and create the exhibit?

Foster: I started my collection of research and exhibit materials in the early 1980s. I am still collecting both!

CBM: What comic book creators did you consult with when creating the exhibit?

Foster: Actually, as many as I could. I have never been afraid to write a letter or pick up a phone, and most people I contacted were more than willing to help me. That not only includes comic book creators (both mainstream and independent) by also comic book distributors, collectors, sellers, you name it. That includes Neal Adams, Will Eisner, Alex Simmons, and many others.

CBM: How has the image of African Americans changed?

Foster: Well, actually, the images of African Americans have become much more realistic, for a number of reasons. At the beginning of comics where Blacks were shown at all, they tended to have exaggerated features (fright wig hair, big bubbly eyes, a pink ring and red lips for a mouth) and were shown as maids, porters, handymen, jockeys and the like. More often than not, Blacks were shown as primitive natives with grass skirts, holding spears (or threatening white people with them) and speaking nonsensical language.

Then in the sixties and seventies, we had Blacks portrayed as pimps, junkies, hustlers and gangsters, speaking "hip" jive and running from the law. Or we had token Black super-heroes who were ghettoized, fighting drug pushers while their white contemporaries were saving entire galaxies.

Nowadays, we have the opportunity to see African Americans in a number of different types of roles, as heroes, as professionals and even as villains. This is due in part to the number of African Americans who are comic book professionals or independent comic book producers. It is also due to the number of comic book artists and writers of all ethnic groups who have made a serious effort to show a diversity of characters in the stories they tell. Is there still work to be done in this area? No question there is. But we have a much clearer and realistic view than ever before.

CBM: Does the exhibit focus on mainstream comics? Which ones?

Foster: Actually, the exhibit includes a number of images from both mainstream and independent comic sources—that is the only way to include as much of the history involved as possible. From the comic about "Lois Lane Turns Black for Twenty Four Hours!" to "Up From Harlem" about how the word of God turned a man from a life of negative influences, to Grass Green's "Super Soul Comics" from the underground period in the 1970s.

CBM: Which ones are your favorites?

Foster: No fair—I love them all! However, I must admit to a more than passing attraction to the character Storm of the X-Men. I think I probably have more Storm items in my collection than any other character!

CBM: What other projects like this are you working on?

Foster: Well, it's funny you should ask. Among the other things I do, I act as a diversity trainer. I actually am developing a curriculum program on diversity based on images from comic books. I can't tell you how much fun it has been.

CBM: Why should people check out this exhibit?

Foster: How about I give you the short answer to this question? These images have never been considered important enough to collect or archive—until now. It is a valuable part of our past that needs to be preserved. And by tracing these images from the various periods of history, we can learn a valuable lesson about who is/was important in our society. And as Marx said, "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

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The Rediscovered Schwartz

by Will Murray

Over the years Batman has been blessed by talented creators and editors who have guided him over his six decades of crime fighting. A surprising number of them were named Schwartz.

Back in the 1940s and '50s, writer Alvin Schwartz scripted the Caped Crusader through many memorable adventures in comic books and the syndicated newspaper strip. In 1964, with Batman titles on the verge of cancellation, super-editor Julie Schwartz stepped in and inaugurated the "New Look" Batman, reviving him just in time for the Batmania craze that would soon sweep the nation and restore the character to prominence.

But between those two Schwartz's stood another Schwartz. An anonymous artist, almost totally in the background, who between 1947-53 ghost-penciled stacks of Batman stories, including some of the most important of the pre- and post-Code era, for Batman creator Bob Kane. His name is Lew Sayre Schwartz. And this is his story.

I tracked Lew to his Cape Cod condo in April 2000. While a steady Atlantic wind keened and moaned against the windows of a studio filled with examples of some of the greatest newspaper strip art ever collected, yet only one Batman splash, "The Funny Man Crimes" (from *Batman* #57), Lew freely talked about his long career.

"When I was 12 or 13 I discovered *Terry and the Pirates*," he began, "and basically got knocked out by Milton's work, as did many, many people. He was an amazing guy. Ultimately he was my hero. He just had the right stuff. Incredible."

Schwartz recalled sneaking into the *Daily News* Building just to watch Caniff color his *Terry and the Pirates* Sundays. The two became friends.

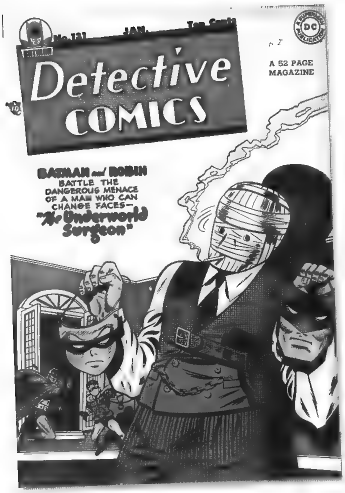
"I had an uncle who was very influential," he offers. "The Boston *Herald* used to have a book fair every year and Milton used to do a chalk talk. I was so excited. I trapped Milton Caniff in the men's room of Symphony Hall where this all occurred. That was the first time I met him. He sent me a biography called *Reflections of an Armchair Marco Polo*. I reminded him of that a number of times."

Schwartz was studying at the Art Student's League when his country called him to help fight World War II. Returning from the Navy in 1946, Schwartz set his sights on the glamorous world of newspaper comic strips. An accidental seaside encounter deflected him off course.

"It's funny. I bumped into Bob Kane in Miami when I got out of the Navy," relates Schwartz. "Strangely enough, he was chasing the same pretty girl that I was at that particular time. It's peculiar. A) I didn't know who he was. B) He was an arrogant son of a bitch. I was really upset with him at that time. Having just gotten out of the Navy, I didn't have any money. But apparently, he did."

Schwartz had noticed this attractive girl sunbathing on the beach and tried to strike up a conversation. Kane appeared and hotly pointed out that Schwartz was trying to hit on his girlfriend. What should have been an awkward encounter destined to fade from memory took a bizarre twist, with Kane's girl playing a crucial role.

"After a couple of weeks I found out who he was," says Schwartz, "and the lady mentioned that I was also a cartoonist, so to speak. Then I got together with Bob and he asked



to look at some of my work. And he said, 'Would you be interested in working for me?' Of course, I loved Batman as a kid. I used to copy it. And I also copied *Terry*. That was the way I learned to draw.

"Bob said, 'I'll call you in September.' And I'm damned if he didn't. He called me and asked me to come to New York. At that time he and Will Eisner were working on a baseball strip called *Dusty Diamond*." He and Eisner hired me. This was the introductory strip. Bob would sketch the key characters."

Schwartz never met Eisner during the project. Kane and Schwartz subsequently developed the strip together.

"I worked on *Dusty Diamond* both as a comic book and a strip, actually. That was in '46. They never got it off the ground. Then a couple of years later Eisner started the comic book."

Schwartz is referring to *Baseball Comics*, starring Rube Rookie, which came out in 1949 with no trace of Bob Kane discernable in the art or credits.

In the meantime, through a friend, the young artist landed a dream project—a coveted new newspaper strip.

"God, they had to be so stupid," Schwartz says ruefully. "I mean, my work was the pits. It hadn't really gone anywhere. Sure enough they hired me and I was under contract to the New York *Herald-Tribune* at the tender age of 20."

His assignment was to launch a newspaper strip version of *The Saint*.

"They flew me out to California to work with the creator of the Saint, who was quite a beast," Schwartz recalls. "Leslie Charteris, who was 6'4", Eurasian, and wore a monocle and no shoes, mostly. I can't tell you how intimidating this guy was. I remember the day I met Charteris. It was 10 o'clock in the morning and he had a drink in his hand. On the plane going to California there was an article that week in *Time* magazine with an underlit photo of Charteris wearing a yachting cap, looking up with the monocle. I got to tell you it scared the Bejeezus out of me. He looked very forbidding."

The start of a promising career proved more promise than career.

"I got myself a studio on Buzzards Bay and thought I was all set," he says. "Then I started working on the strip. I was getting daily revisions from Charteris. Probably he was right. He well could have been. But at 19 and 20 you think you know a lot more than you do. They had to have been idiots to have hired me in the first place. We were just getting the early stuff prepared. That lasted about six to eight months. I just got the last of these messages I was willing to tolerate. I sent him a four-letter word reply. And that was the end of Lew Schwartz on *The Saint*." But not the end of his career.

"By that time Bob had called me and I started ghosting Batman for him, doing his pencils."

Impressions of Batman's originator have remained indelible despite the passing of 50 years.

"Bob made it fast," explains Schwartz. "He became almost an overnight celebrity with Batman. When I first met him in Florida in 1946 he already had almost ten years of people knowing who he was and making money he never dreamed of making. Even if it was $50,000 a year, $50,000 in 1946 was pretty good. I remember that he had Batman's head cut into the linoleum of his studio. I looked at this and thought to myself, there's a certain amount of arrogance that goes with this guy. And in many ways he deserved to be proud."

Although more detailed memories have faded, Schwartz does remember the main scripter of that era.

"Yes, Bill Finger. Most of the scripts that I remember were Bill. There were a few others. Kane put it best: 'I never gave that guy enough credit for what he did.' Because when you think about it, Bill Finger more than likely dreamed up Batman—but I don't know that. I worked on enough of Bill's stories to know he was an incredibly imaginative guy. And the characters

early on were great, weren't they? Of all those writers that I remember, Finger's scripts were the most interesting. For what he did, he was as good as you get. The scripts were very simplistic, thank God. They were pretty cut and dried stuff. If you rummage through that period when I was doing it, from '47-48 right to '53, you didn't have to be a rocket scientist to read *Batman*."

Early in 1947, Schwartz briefly ghosted *Scorchy Smith* for artist Rodlow Willard, who also drew *Tiger Man* for Fiction House.

"I was excited about it," he admits. "That strip always had a legacy to it. This guy's work was wickedly bad. It didn't pay very much."

After a year or so, another opportunity surfaced. Hired to work in the King Features bullpen, Schwartz's main job was to rescale Sunday pages to fit different page size requirements. The task entailed cutting the original Sunday pages and in some cases doing necessary touchup work. He got the job through Jimmy Hatlo ghost artist Bob Dunn, although Milton Caniff also helped arrange for the position.

"I went to work with King in '48," he says. "I think they basically hired me because I could imitate Milton's stuff on the rescales. There was always a little bit that needed to be done and I could do that with no difficulty. Interestingly, later on I noticed Milton began to draw right past the end of the panel, so you would white out the line and it was his stuff."

Schwartz was not relegated to just rescaling duties.

"Part of my job was also that if somebody got too sick, too drunk or whatever and it fell into my genre that I would get that extra work to do," he adds. "I did *Brick Bradford* for a while. And I ghosted *Secret Agent X-9* for Mel Graff, among others."

Schwartz's working method on Batman was simple. He laid out the stories, penciling everything tightly except for figures of Batman and Robin, which Kane would complete. Taking a stat of an old un-inked Batman splash-page featuring the Penguin, ("The Penguin's Fabulous Fowls," *Batman* #76) he describes his usual approach.

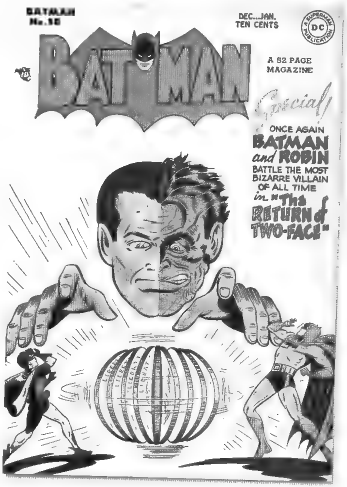
"I never did anything but pencils. I would leave Batman and Robin loose, really loose. Everything else was this tight. It didn't take much to ink that. And I would turn the pages over to Kane and he would turn them in and keep me as far away from DC Comics as he could. I worked for Bob six to seven years—I can't remember—but in that time frame, Mort Weisinger was trying desperately to find out who the hell was doing Bob's work.

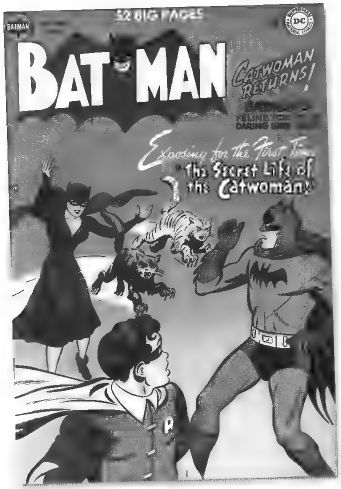
"Finally, the last year that I worked for King Features—I don't know how he did it—he got the phone number of the phone booth in the art department of King Features and called and asked for me. Somebody called me to the phone and it was Mort Weisinger. And of course I denied everything. I should explain my heroes were in the newspapers, OK? I would never say a word. God forbid. I just didn't want to share this with somebody like Alex Raymond or Milton Caniff, or any of that group. In those days cartoonists working in comic books were not held in very high esteem. Of course, that's all changed now."

Schwartz's brush with Weisinger was brief.

"I couldn't have cared," he insists. "He called me once or twice and tried to take me out to lunch. I didn't want any part of it. I didn't want to get in the middle of it. He didn't trouble me anymore. And Bob was paying me, for conditions then and for a kid, a lot of money. I was getting a hundred bucks a page, which was good money for pencils. But he would turn it in and get $500. Which was fine with me, God bless him.

"The fact is that Bob's contract called for 12 stories."

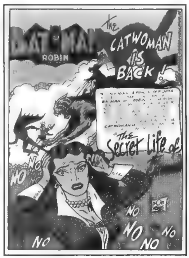




Schwartz laughs at the thought. "Never happen. With me—I was working 9-5 at King Features, and freelancing on other stuff as well—and I was knocking out 20 stories a year for him. So that's not a bad living. At that time the readership of Batman was 7 million, easily."

Between Batman and his syndicate work, Lew Schwartz was a rising star in the broad field of comics.

"Thanks to Milton Caniff, somewhere rolling around my archives is a note telling me that since I was earning a living drawing, I should call Rube Goldberg and come join the Cartoonist's Society. So from 1947 to about '53 I was the youngest member of the National Cartoonist's Society. Sure as hell isn't that way anymore. Now I'm probably one of the oldest!"



Schwartz's work began appearing regularly in *Batman* and *Detective Comics* in mid-1948, although "The Underworld Surgeon" in *Detective* #131 (Jan 1948) was his ghostly debut. His splash page was reused for the cover.

"What DC did was that any splash they liked automatically became a cover," he notes. "I remember the figure with the bandages."

During his Batman stint, Schwartz drew virtually every major Batman villain there was, most often featuring the Joker.

"Bob used to send me his version of a character," he says, "which I could never quite achieve. But it looked all right. I used to enjoy drawing the Joker. Thinking back, it was probably easy. Although the Penguin was easy to draw with the big nose. Two-Face was hard to do because of the separation in making it different from frame to frame to get a certain level of expression. But what used to drive me nuts was that I became so bored after four to five years because it was all the same. I used to sit on the train with a notebook and try to lay out one page against the other, just making them more interesting to look at."

Several classic pre-Code Batman tales turn out to be Schwartz's work. Among them are "The Secret Life of Catwoman," (*Batman* #62), "The New Crimes of Two-Face," (*Batman* #68) and "Untold Tales of the Bat-Signal" (*Detective Comics* #168).

"The Manhunter from Mars" in issue #78 later inspired the J'onn J'onzz series. Although credited to Sheldon Moldoff in some reprints, the Joker's untold origin, "The Man Behind the Red Hood," (*Detective Comics* #168) also appears to be his pencils. His work appeared primarily in *Batman* and *Detective Comics* and occasionally in *World's Finest* at the end of his tenure.

After five years of juggling two careers, Schwartz began to scent the first smoky hint of burnout approaching.

"I went on a cartoonist's junket to Korea in 1953," he explains. "The day the armistice was declared, I was up in the Punch Bowl, a particularly ferocious place where our guys and the Chinese were hacking it out. We could see Chinese soldiers coming up out of foxholes to retreat, and I had no more right to be there than the man in the moon because I had at least two kids then. I was on an airfield in Taegu and they're telling us what to do if we got shot down. No one who ever experiences war has any love of it. I went on that trip to get away from Batman. And I spent every waking moment in hospitals, in officers clubs

and enlisted men's clubs. Everywhere—Batman. Batman. I drew Batman on bandages, legs and arms—you name it. Good God, when I came back I was blind. But I pretty well had it. And it wasn't going anywhere. The newspaper comics were beginning to suffer even then. I got up one morning and I said, 'Wow! I can't do this anymore.' I had to do something else."

Schwartz's final Batman stories appeared in *World's Finest Comics*, the last one being "The Man Who Wanted to Die with Batman" in issue #69, dated March, 1954. Kane took Schwartz's mid-1953 resignation without flinching.

"I think that he probably missed the money because I kept him so far ahead on everything," laughs Schwartz. "Other than that I don't think he cared. There's always somebody who's going to be there. Bob considered himself a factory manager. Batman was a product. And Bob's job was to general manage that product."

Sheldon Moldoff, who had ghosted for Kane in the early '40s, returned to the bat-fold.

"I've never met any of these guys, interestingly," he remarks. "What's interesting is that at this point in time I don't have a frame of reference on all this sort of thing. But some of them I remember very clearly. I remember the drawings, not necessarily the titles. There was one with a big gorilla. That gorilla story I remember very clearly because they used it for a cover. Now I don't remember being paid ever for covers. But Bob probably did. But any number of splash pages I did turned into covers. I remember liking that Gorilla story."

"The Gorilla Boss of Gotham City" was published in *Batman* #75, one of the early gorilla stories on which DC made its mark in the early '50s. DC photostatted Schwartz's splash of a rampaging giant gorilla and used it as the cover, with Win Mortimer adding the swinging figures of Batman and Robin. When the story was reprinted in *Batman Annual* #3, Schwartz's gorilla was again cover-featured. Schwartz retains a stat of his original pencil splash to this day, which shows a different set of Batman and Robin figures which were removed in the inking stage.

Taking out a folder of 50-year-old *Batman* comics, Schwartz starts to page through the issues, pointing out examples of his work versus that of the artists who worked directly for DC, like Dick Sprang, Win Mortimer and Jim Mooney.

"I knew the day would come when somebody would say, 'Hey, prove it,'" he chuckles.

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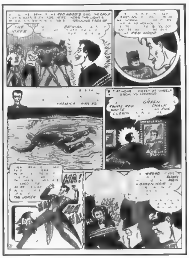
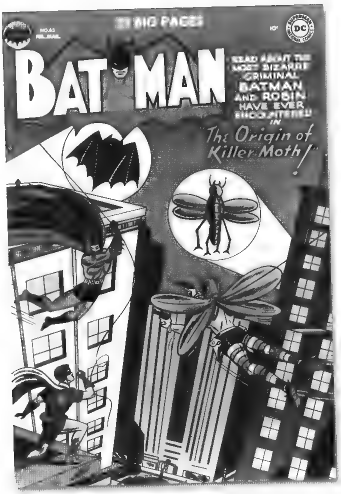
Examining "The Jungle Batman," Schwartz says, "Either this is mine or it's somebody else, but one of us stole from *Steve Canyon* here. This airplane looks exactly like Caniff. I remember I used to draw a lousy Batplane. It didn't look too exciting. The page break down looks like me too. The figures are poorly drawn. Yeah, this is mine. It's funny. I remember the squid. It has Roy Crane boats in it. It has to be me."



Batman #69, cover-featuring "The King of the Cats," in which a reformed Catwoman's brother takes to crime, elicits this response:

"This was mine. I had an amazing sense of perspective. Not very good. I can always tell because my ancillary characters look nothing like Bob Kane's work. You should always look for the double circle. There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would always be the newspaper with a face in it."

It turned out that Schwartz also drew the other two Batman stories in that issue, "The Batman Expose" and "The Buttons of Doom." Coming to what must have been one of his most famous efforts, "The Return of Two-Face" in *Batman* #50 (Dec 1948), he says, "Yeah. This is mine. Talk about Deja Vu."

It develops that Schwartz drew certain pioneering stories like the first flying Bat-Cave tale and the initial installment of a long-running series about the Dynamic Duo's futuristic counterparts, "Batman II and Robin, Junior." He drew more Joker stories than any other recurring villain, but his Catwoman tales stand out because they took place during the period when she was briefly reformed.

"You can see traces of Milton Caniff in my Catwoman," he allows. "I enjoyed those stories. I did three or four stories with her."

"Batman in the Future" from *Batman* #52 was another of his splashes that became covers. Schwartz also drew the first two appearances of Killer Moth in *Batman* #63 and #64.

"I'm looking for layouts because I would break up the page somewhat differently," he says, studying "Commissioner's Gordon's Greatest Case." "There are telltale pieces of business. I used to be pretty good at designing. I used to do little inserts. If I did this I must have got lazy. I'm not sure."

Coming to "The Mask of Mister Cipher," he's more certain. "I don't even have to look at this one. This is very typical. Plus it's my lettering. Anything that carried Bob Kane's name from mid-1947 to '53 was probably my pencils. Because I did everything."

The question of inkers comes up. The inking was done at DC, so Schwartz had no direct contact with them. But he recalls "a lot of guys" inked his work. "I think Charlie Paris is one. He followed my work pretty well. There were good inkers and bad inkers. He was a technician."

Although he did no other comic book work, Schwartz got to know other comic book legends, including the creators of Superman. "I was at Bob's apartment in New York the day that Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel came over to try to talk him into getting into the lawsuit against DC," Schwartz recalls. "And Bob's father, who was a wise old Jewish guy, said, 'Listen, they guarantee you X amount of money. It's okay if you don't own it. They're paying you. Be quiet about it.' He talked Bob out of doing that, and he was smart because the money kept coming in. Jerry and Joe won the suit. They won two million dollars. The two lawyers took $500,000 apiece and Jerry and Joe got $500,000 apiece. Three years later they were broke. And they never recovered from it."

As the artist remembers that day, Siegel and Shuster had Kane half-convinced to sue for Batman.

"They knew when they were touching a nerve," he says. "Don't forget the first check that they got signed away all the rights. Bob didn't get a cut of any of the merchandise until the first Batman movie."

Asked if he recalls drawing his first Batman story, the artist confesses, "Not at all. I look back at this stuff now. Basically, compared to what's being done now, nothing is happening. Even in the art, there's not much in close-ups."

Lew Schwartz was a ghost artist in the truest sense of the term. "I replaced Jerry Robinson," he explains. "Jerry and I have been fast friends for many years and we share our Bob Kane stories. Interestingly enough, I owned a page out of that first Joker story. I finally sold it. Now in that story it still doesn't take into account Jerry may very well have come in with the [Joker] playing card. But Bob never drew an arm that came out of an armpit, OK? Many times it would come out of the hip. And that page is living proof. So who knows who drew what?"

Putting the file of comics aside, he reflects on his associa-

tion with Bob Kane. "I was probably one of the very few people that worked for Bob that ever had a relationship with him," he says flatly. "Or had anything good to say about him. When he was living in New York, I used to see him once in a while. We'd go out to dinner. God, that man..." Shaking his head, Schwartz chuckles at the memory. "The last time that I saw him was in California in 1992 or '93. It was the first time that he ever picked up a check. He would always remind me of how much he paid me years ago, but not how much extra he made on me, for what I did for him. I went out to see him because I thought it would be interesting after doing the Caniff video, to do one with Bob. Certainly there was nobody around who could poke around those corners any better that I could. We started. But they turned it down because of the complexities. It was right around the time of the first movie.

"Bob had been trying to sell an autobiography for years called *Batman and Me*," Schwartz adds. "I was on the phone with him one day and I said, 'Be a good guy. Sign a copy and send it to me.' He said very grudgingly—and I could tell he was ashamed—'Gee, Lew, you're not in it.' And I said, 'Well, Bob, I can understand that. I only worked for you for seven years.' Imagine. I did well over 100 Batman stories over that time period. But the fact is by that time in my life, I was into the film business and having a good time and despite my frustrations of not being a great cartoonist, I had a very rich and comfortable career, which I'm very grateful for."

In 1955, Schwartz left cartooning for the television advertising department of J. Walker Thompson Company. "On the strength of having done Batman, I went in as a storyboard artist," he notes. "And I was having the time of my life because I could draw twice as fast as anyone in that advertising department. I'm knocking this stuff out. I would never pencil. I would just dip a brush in and do it. Then I began to realize what the hell I had been preparing myself for, without ever realizing it."

This ultimately led to forming his own outfit, Ferro, Mogubgub and Schwartz in 1961. Over the years he worked on everything from *Dr. Strangelove* to *Sesame Street*, racking up a clutch of Emmys and Clios in the process.

Schwartz's dream of launching his own strip came crashing down in the early 1950s when he and a close friend teamed up to do a strip together. The Hall Syndicate planned to run it, but at the last moment, the other man backed out, citing the demands of the syndicate he was under contract to.

Not long after, a new strip debuted from his former best friend which Schwartz claims was a "dead ringer" of his own concept. Declining to name the strip, Schwartz will only say that the feature still runs today. But he's not bitter. "Spilt milk" he says. "That guy probably did me a favor. If I had done that strip, I would have spent all those years sitting in one room drawing. I probably would have ended up just another third-rate cartoonist. Instead, my life expanded into a more vibrant world, far more rewarding than being relegated to the solitary confinement of the drawing board."

Looking back over that long career, Lew Sayre Schwartz has put the world of Batman and comic books far behind him. "We bandy about the word comic," he muses. "And we talk about the comic book. They're not comic. They are more and more manuals for medical architecture, if you will. I mean, they're crazy. They've overextended the rubber band and it snapped a long time ago. And they don't know it. The story lines are macabre. There can't be that many dysfunctional people on this planet."

A newspaper strip artist to the core, Schwartz looks back on his era as a true Golden Age. "When I think about what was produced between say 1920 and 1960, not just Batman

continued on page 32

The Many Phases

by Chris Lambert

In *Comic Book Marketplace* #70, I broke down the different directions Batman's life had taken him and had categorized them accordingly. In that issue, we saw Batman start off as a vigilante and proceed through father figure, global guardian, detective and campy pop icon before finally returning to his roots as a dark avenger of crime in the last days of the Silver Age. The article stopped in the era of 1973. Each phase of Batman's career previously had solved one problem and presented another. The upcoming phases would be no different.

Treading Water (Working Super Hero, 1974-77)

The previous six years had been spent polishing Batman's comic book image, which had been tarnished by television between 1966 and 1968. Now that writers Denny O'Neil and Frank Robbins, teamed with artists Neal Adams, Irv Novick and Dick Giordano, had brilliantly retrieved The Caped Crusader from the stigma of camp television star by sending him back to his dark roots, what encore could they possibly produce?

The year 1974 started off with no break in quality. The Batman titles, which had just switched format to fifty-cent 100-page spectaculars, kept the O'Neil and Robbins stories teamed up with the moody but exciting artwork of Adams, Novick and Giordano. In the first nine issues of this packaging experiment, not only were readers treated to a fine array of reprints, but they also got the "tweaking" and modernizing of more villains in brand new stories featuring Catwoman, Penguin and Scarecrow. The new, more violent Two-Face, Joker and Man-Bat also returned as the fans of the Darknight Detective seemed to be getting exactly what they were

clamoring for. And this was just in the Batman flagship title.

Over in Batman's other four-color vehicle, *Detective Comics*, Jim Aparo had brought his tough, "Adams" like pencils to the original Batman book, with superb writer Archie Goodwin supplying the stories. It was decided that Bruce Wayne would revert to his bored playboy routine, shying away from the concerned philanthropist image that had been in place for so long. Batman seemed to be heading for headier heights, not seen since the Golden Age of comics.

But things quickly began to break up. Issue 255, "Moon of the Wolf," was Neal Adams's last work on the *Batman* title, and for all of its recently generated excitement *Batman* was still a bi-monthly mag. Over in *Detective Comics*, Jim Aparo's pencils vanished after a few issues and a musical chairs of artistry began, although the book didn't suffer much with the likes of Alex Toth and Walt Simonson (in a Manhunter crossover) being two of the "chairs." Yet it was artist continuity that suffered with the rotation of pencilers.

Adding insult to injury, Denny O'Neil then began to pull back on his schedule of Bat-books. A few months after an interesting delve into Bruce Wayne's childhood fear of guns (featuring a team-up with The Shadow), his work became more sporadic. Mystery writer David V. Reed came aboard and began taking over the fictional direction of Batman's

# of BATMAN

career. Over in *Detective Comics*, new X-Men co-creator Len Wein spun a multi-part tale with art by returning Jim Aparo entitled "The Bat Murders" concerning Ra's Al Guhl.

But other than a wonderful tale by O'Neil, "There is No Hope in Crime Alley," introducing Dr. Leslie Thompkins, (*Detective Comics* #457 1976) Batman began treading water with run of the mill mystery after mystery. The books soon became less a Batman vehicle than an Ellery Queen monthly. To make matters worse, Marvel artist and Conan the Barbarian artist/inker Ernie Chan came aboard as penciler, which only served to make The Caped Crusader look muscle-bound like some DC version of their own "Bat"-barian.

There were a few superior mysteries among the bunch such as, "The Daily Death of Terry Tremayne," "Menace of the Fiery Heads" and "The Corpse Came C.O.D." These were published in early 1976, which finally saw the *Batman* book go monthly, but sales on *Detective Comics* were getting weak (as they had in 1964) and were not aided by newer, weaker, super-villains such as The Black Spider, Shiekh and Captain Stingaree.

Now Batman's career seemed mundane when compared to just a few years earlier. Granted, the Caped Crusader was still dark, somber and mysterious, but some better characterization and excitement was sorely needed. He would get exactly that as well as start a buzz among comics fans within the year.

Wanted: Batman (Outlaw Figure, 1977-78)

Batman had now been dark and somber for almost a decade, the campy television show a distant memory to comic buying fans. But the book was boring and dull and had been for at least two to three years as some of the better writers and artists moved on to other non-Bat related projects.

The Caped Crusader suddenly needed some excitement, some re-polishing and some stamp of personality to offset the doldrums the titles found themselves languishing in. As 1977 rolled around, DC Comics got that and more in the form of both a new writer and artist for the *Detective Comics* title.

It came just in time as *Detective Comics* was about to be cancelled (a situation it found itself in much too often) once again. Writer Steve Englehart, fresh from a successful stint on Marvel's *Avengers* and *Dr. Strange*, wanted to quit comics to write novels. But he let it be known that before he did, he'd like to go out with a bang with some storylines he had in mind for Batman.

He started his stint at DC with his 12-issue run on *JLA*, but his Batman stories in *Detective Comics* soon followed. In his first tale (*Detective Comics* #469 May 1977) Englehart created a new menacing villain for the Gotham Guardian…Dr. Phosphorous. The two-part tale of a radioactive man loose in Gotham also introduced a love interest to Batman. But this love interest was no run of the mill, Lois Lane clone, like Julie Madison, Linda Page or Vickie Vale. This young woman, Silver St. Cloud looked like she might have some staying power in the Bat's life.

The new artist, Walt Simonson, had drawn a few Batman stories before and was well suited for the Caped Crusader's adventures. But it was not his renderings the fans were clamoring for. With the start of a new two-parter (*Detective* #471-472) comic readers were introduced to relative newcomer Marshall Rogers, who had been drawing Atom and Hawkman back-up stories in *Detective Comics* for about six months.

Marshall's sleek pencil line (along with Terry Austin's inks) and minor changes on Batman's costume had fans eagerly awaiting this still bi-monthly title. Rogers began

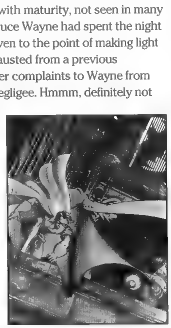
by extending the length of Batman's cape (a hard thing to do since Neal Adams had already lengthened it once already) and stretched the ears on his cowl to the point where it seemed like Batman might puncture low flying clouds with every jerk of his head.

Englehart then brought back Dr. Hugo Strange and his giant man-monsters, who had not been seen since *Batman* #1. This was appropriate since Rogers' art truly harkened back to the Golden Age of comics. But the writing and dialogue were strictly modern and up-to-date as Strange hints at Batman's motivations. After proclaiming himself a lonely genius, Batman states, "Only if the genius is evil, Strange!" To this Hugo retorts, "Spoken like a true fanatic, my dear Batman." This is one of the earliest examples of Batman as the driven, almost obsessed crime fighter that would become so common in later phases of the Dark Knight's career.

The scribe also introduces Boss Thorne and his corrupt politics into the book, which manages to get Batman outlawed by mayoral order. A much older, more adult Robin comes to the Caped Crusader's aid in the course of Englehart's run on the book but is surprised to hear sirens heading in the direction of the now reunited Dynamic Duo. "I can't believe it," quizzes Robin, "You—ordered to cease and desist! Well, you've been an outlaw before—and so have I!" A comment from Batman, calling his partner "chum," and this indeed seemed like a long lost Batman story from the forties.

But new love interest Silver St. Cloud wouldn't go away, and this was a relationship handled with maturity, not seen in many comics at the time. Hints that Bruce Wayne had spent the night with Silver were right up front even to the point of making light about Bruce possibly being exhausted from a previous evening's exertion. She makes her complaints to Wayne from her own bed, wearing a flimsy negligee. Hmmm, definitely not your father's Batman.

Englehart's tenure came to a close as The Joker returned in "The Laughing Fish." This tale continued the example of O'Neil and Adams portrayal of the Joker (from *Batman* #251, "The Joker's 5 Way Revenge") as a straight madman.



The final conflict between Joker and Batman makes Silver think of a policeman's wife and his dangerous career choice, never knowing whether her husband will come home or not. She has recognized Bruce's jaw line beneath The Batman's cowl and does not wish this anxiety to be part of her life and tells him so.

Batman again defeats the Crime Clown, but now realizes the price he must pay for these victories…his own happiness. He muses to himself that, "Sometimes my world goes crazy." Never has Batman seemed so real, so human. And fans were ready for more, but again problems reared their heads.

The main problem was that these interesting changes in Batman's life were only being heralded within the pages of *Detective Comics*, not in the *Batman* title. Next, for all its greatness, Englehart's take on the Batman, no matter how much drama and characterization he put into it, was only an extended eight part story, and now he was gone to write his novel. Artist Marshall Rogers followed a few issues later and *Detective Comics* was still a bi-monthly.

Fans needed more of this good stuff that they had been reading for the last year. Englehart and Rogers had given them good art and mature writing, drama and love angles. To keep fans interested, DC Comics would almost have to give readers a soap opera to keep them coming back.

Soap Opera Batman (The Marvelization of Batman, 1978-82)

After the loss of Englehart and Rogers on *Detective Comics*, DC needed a way to keep the energy on that particular Batbook going and hoped that some of that excitement would then flow over to Batman's regular book. Batman's appearances in *Brave and Bold*, a team-up mag, and *World's Finest*, a book shared with Superman, were just plodding along and were almost counted out of regular continuity by this time. But *Batman* and *Detective Comics* would have to be kept viable.

By the late Seventies, Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter at rival Marvel Comics had alienated many of their top talent. And in those days comics were a two-horse town. So, by the end of the "Me" decade, comic fans saw an exodus of talent from Marvel to DC. Writers Roy Thomas, Gerry Conway and Marv Wolfman, along with artists George Perez and Gene Colan found themselves working at the "House of Superman."

These creators seemed to bring their old work habits with them also, or at least the old work edict from ex-Marvel founder/editor/writer, Stan Lee. Stan had make comics interesting back in the mid '60s, and more important, he kept them that way month after month to the point where Marvel was the big comic company that DC followed.

Stan had an edict which he believed was the reason for success—"change without change." That is, to mix up the

books, throw in lots of excitement, fights and so on, but don't forget the drama, love or pathos. In other words, a soap opera. Lee then went on to make sure that no matter how much the books changed, the heroes be brought back to the starting point eventually, ready for the next "change." This in effect kept Marvel readers on a hook, and created the term "Marvel Zombie," readers that slavishly bought and read their favorite four-color adventures month after month. This is what was needed at DC.

Strangely enough, this new phase started with what could only be called a sci-fi anniversary story. In *Batman* #300, (Jun 1978) readers were presented with a futuristic tale entitled, "The Last Batman Story." In this story Bruce Wayne must decide whether or not to keep fighting crime in a futuristic society that resembled more of a *Legion of Superheroes* comic than a *Batman* book.

After this came the soap opera. Former Lois Lane type clone, Vickie Vale returned, not as a snoopy picture taker for the *Gotham Gazette*, but this time as a more hard-bitten news photographer. Both she and Bruce Wayne seemed to hit it off immediately. Butler Alfred's never-before-known daughter Julia Wentworth was created and brought into the comics fold, creating a Vickie-Bruce-Julia love triangle that had Batman on the periphery of the story, instead of serving as the main focus.

But a single love triangle with Bruce Wayne wasn't good enough for this new Batman phase. The Caped Crusader got his own love triangle as Catwoman returned in a "reformed" closer-to-good-guy role than ever before. Talia (the Daughter of the Demon) also showed up to complete a costumed love triangle for Batman. In the early '80s, these two women, along with a more grown-up Robin, as well as Government agent King Farraday, tackled Talia's father, Ra's Al Ghul. It was a four-part (*Batman* #332-335) "impossible mission" story that rivaled anything that author Alistair Maclean was producing at the time.

But if this were a true soap opera, wouldn't somebody's health have to be failing? During this phase, Commissioner Gordon's health began to fail and newly appointed Detective Harvey Bullock was assigned to watch over the ailing police official. Nowadays seen as more of a rough cop with a heart of gold, this character originally was a touch more "dirty," and resembled more of a "snitch" to the Mayor than an honest working cop.

More health problems followed for the Dynamic Duo, as both Batman and Robin were bitten by and transformed into vampires. This became another multi-part story, crossing over into the pages of *Detective Comics* (to help with circulation there) before finishing with *Batman* #349-351, released in the summer of 1982.

These tales of love and drama were aided by ex-Marvelite Gene Colan, who was a master of both realistic human poses and dynamic action designs. He was aided by newcomer to DC, Don Newton, who also excelled at drawing human figures (especially beautiful women) and added a dark moodiness that crept into all of his panels depicting the Dark Knight.

But there was more! Another ongoing sub-plot concerned the returning villainess, Poison Ivey, who had taken control of Bruce Wayne and other Gotham City rich folk and began siphoning off their funds as they found themselves powerless to the love pheromones she used to control the rich males.

Multiple love triangles, health problems, financial woes and still plenty of super-hero action were present in Batman's new books now. These monthly books posed the constant questions: Would Bruce spurn Julia? Would Vickie find out Bruce's darkest secrets? Would Commissioner Gordon recover? Would Bullock get Gordon fired? Would the Wayne foundation be turned over to a super villainess? Stan Lee must have been rubbing his hands in glee at his covert influence in the Caped Crusader's magazines.

But what next? This period in Batman's life was a very enjoyable read, keeping the darkness, drama, love interest and action at an even blend. The only possible chink in the book was Robin's longtime association with Batman. By now, Dick Grayson was in his early to mid-twenties, and was the leader of a very popular group and huge selling comic entitled *The Teen Titans*. Robin needed to distance himself from being the Boy Wonder, to accent his new young adult image. If Dick were to leave to pursue his own career, where would that leave Batman?

Parenting Again! (A New Robin, 1983-85)

At this point in the Caped Crusader's life, there was plenty of melodrama in the ongoing soap opera, and much more of the same would be showing up on the horizon. But something else was needed in Batman's life, maybe a purpose beyond his mission against crime. It showed up in the form of a young boy named Jason Todd, the new Robin.

Jason Todd and his family showed up when the circus came to Gotham. Friends of Dick Grayson, they were pleased when Dick arrived to see (in the 500th appearance of Batman in *Detective Comics*, #526) their "Flying Todds" act. Yes, the Todds' were circus aerialists and to make a long story short, once Jason's parents were killed helping Batman track down half-man, half-alligator Killer Croc, he became a ward of Bruce Wayne. This brought the book back to where it had been in

1938 when young Dick Grayson had found himself orphaned. This left the original Robin free to do his thing with the Titans, while leaving readers and Batman with a young partner that hadn't spent the last 45 years growing up beyond his "Boy Wonder" status. Again, Stan Lee's "change without change."

But young Jason needed some extra training and readers were introduced for the first time in almost half-a-century, to a young Robin-in-waiting, going through crime-fighting growing pains. Nowhere else but in his debut month was this aspect more highlighted.

The February 1984 issue of *Batman* (#368) featured Jason in his Robin costume for his "coming out." The same month over in *Detective Comics*, Jason finds himself going up against Crazy-Quilt, an ex-villain of Dick's from his solo run in *Star-Spangled Comics*, from the 1940s. Jason found out the hard way that Robin's reputation could work for him in many cases, but also enrage old foes that Jason had personally never laid eyes on. Batman (now in the role of mentor/crime fighter, like some form of Caped Ward Cleaver) comments at issues end, "A tough way to start out—bearing the burden of Dick Grayson's legacy…But fortunately that legacy also aided you."

And the soap opera was far from over as another triangle started shortly before Jason took to wearing the crime fighting togs. In back-to-back issues of *Detective Comics* (#329-330 Aug and Sep) another love triangle came to the forefront. "The Thief of the Night," was introduced as Anton Knight, a cat burglar that bonded with the dark of night as much as Batman had ever done. His purloined booty is given up as tribute to his true love, Nocturna, an albino scientist that also craves the night. Only Nocturna, who had been introduced in *Batman* #363 (also Sep 1983), had her romantic sights set on the Gotham Guardian.

The second triangle began when, to get at Batman/Bruce Wayne, Nocturna mesmerized young Jason, feeding on his emotional need for a mother, and wound up getting legal guardianship of the boy. Now when Jason wanted to fight crime with Batman, he'd have to sneak away from his foster mother to do so. Bruce fought back in court as he legally tried to win Jason back.

This was good melodrama, and with Don Newton and Gene Colan still on board with excellent, moody artwork, combining with new-to-Batman scribe Doug Moench, the two main Bat-titles were well worth reading. Only a problem was starting to rear its head.

Writer Moench fell in love with the Knight-Nocturna-Batman entanglement, as well as the Batman/Bruce-Nocturna-Jason one that had been set in place. The pair of night-loving evildoers made easily over a dozen appearances between them in just a few short years. Addictive as they are, even soap operas get tiring after awhile. Batman was ready for another change. But in which direction to head? Even with the advent of a new partner he was still dark and moody. How about grim and gritty?

The Dark Myth Continues (The Tireless Avenger, 1986-Present)

This, the longest phase of Batman's career, can be broken down into two categories. The first brings the grim and gritty Caped Crusader inspired by the works of Frank Miller. This started in the mid-eighties, when artist/writer Miller created the "Dark Knight Returns" story line set sometime in the future, where an aging Batman truly becomes an urban avenger with an attitude.

The story has been gone over enough times and is famous enough among comic readers for them to know the plot; suffice to say that this was a truly inspiring work that changed the industry in tone and format (the thick, glossy-coated, almost mini-trade this tale was presented in became known for a while as the Dark Knight style book, before switching eventually to being called Prestige books). But even Miller confessed in a recent article that it was a story that had a certain point, but was not meant to be copied or followed or taken as a new direction.

Miller followed this tale with "Batman: Year One," a re-exploring of Bruce Wayne's roots and a re-definition of his and Commissioner Gordon's role with one another and the city they both loved. But this was not the only key point in Batman's turn to the darker side of his emotions. That came with the demise of a different, yet same Robin.

With no warning, DC changed Jason Todd from Dick Grayson clone to street punk in *Batman* #408. Yes, he was still called Jason Todd, but now he had a criminal as a father and lived on the streets. DC Comics had Batman take this urchin in, train him to fight crime only to have him killed by the Joker in #428 (summer of 1988) The odd thing about his death though, it took place after a phone poll that group editor Denny O'Neil set up. He explained later that the vote to save Robin "gimmick" took a year to prepare with AT&T. Considering

Jason was changed to street punk in #408, that left only six months for DC to let the new persona catch on before they arranged for his death—the possibility anyway.

The way to present and sell comics was obviously changing as readers grew bored more quickly and with so many other distractions vying for their entertainment dollar. In addition, DC found that one-shots were another way to grab readers' money.

In the single stand-alone Prestige format book "The Killing Joke" fan favorites Alan Moore and Brian Bolland presented us with a dark introspective character study of the Joker's origin. The brilliant tale was marred though, in my opinion, as Batman and the Joker share a laugh together on the beach while Barbara (Batgirl) Gordon was paralyzed when the Joker shot her and her father was tied up naked and forced to watch subsequent torture (or possibly rape?). This story flies in the face of Batman's modus operandi.

A new Robin was introduced shortly after in a story entitled "A Lonely Place of Dying." Tim Drake was now the new Boy Wonder and readers took to him so well that he received his own title, the first Robin to do so.

The 1989 Tim Burton-directed *Batman* film reflected Batman's look as he not only remained grim and tortured, but also now had more books in which to be that way. *Legends of the Dark Knight*, sporting four different number one covers to choose from, lent writers a place to get away from strict continuity. Now stories could happen in the past and be enjoyed without having to keep stories and their individual time lines straight from one another. *Elseworlds*, a fancy name for "Imaginary Stories" not seen in Batman's book since the early sixties, also offered that same freedom.

The second half of this section, or sub-phase if you will, in the Caped Crusader's life can be traced to the scourge of the 1990s—"the publishing event." This came in the early to mid-nineties with new villain Bane and the "Breaking of the Bat" story line. Yes, Batman's back was broken and Bat fans were horrified as Batman experienced his first major defeat. This story line rolled into Azrael becoming a new, temporary, vicious Batman while Bruce healed.

The next story arc was "Knight's End" as readers saw Bruce Wayne hesitantly move through rehab and the fear of another injury before taking on the Bat's mantle again. Poor art, though, was making Batman look too modern, too posed. With the scratchy and angular style of pencils by artists like Kelly Jones and Ted McKeever in *Legends of the Dark Knight*, the Gotham Guardian's persona seemed darker also.

This was heightened as one event after another took Batman down the darkest path in his life. In what could have saved his emotional health, the impending marriage to his doctor, Shandra Kinsolving, was ruined with her reduction to a child-like state, crushing one of Bruce's last chances for happiness.

In the mid nineties came the Contagion arc (infection in Gotham), Cataclysm arc (earthquake destroys Gotham), No Man's Land arc (aftermath of No Man's Land, which I affectionately call "Escape from Gotham City"), and, finally, Bruce Wayne: Murderer. This last one put the Gotham billionaire behind bars for a murder he did not commit. He eventually escaped prison to wage war on crime as he always had, this time by abandoning his Bruce Wayne alter ego altogether, reducing the Dark Knight almost to the state of cruel crime-fighting animal.

Throughout the last decade Batman's obsession with his holy mission has also alienated most of his once again growing Bat family. This was not even a cold, logical Batman we saw, but almost a hate-filled one who barely kept him on the right side of the law.

One last problem the Dark Knight faced was overexposure from his four monthly titles after a new book, *Shadow of the Bat*, was published, cancelled after 90-plus issues and replaced by *Gotham Knights*. Overexposure for the top villain, The Joker, was also a problem as he killed Robin II, Commissioner Gordon's wife, paralyzed Gordon's daughter and murdered thousands of innocent people throughout his 60-some year career…and he was still popping up almost monthly in *Batman* and other DC books.

Batman is now standing at the crossroads. There is no way for him to go back to a lighter, less grim persona. He is no doubt a reflection of society at this point, just as he always seemed to be in the past. A moratorium on certain over-used events and villains may not be the answer. Possibly a cleaner rendering art style and better characterization from the creators might help. In any case, sixty-five years after his creation he is still one of the most recognizable icons in American pop culture history. No matter how current creators may twist, tweak, bend, or add to his myth, Batman's credo from *Detective* #27 (May 1939) says it best:

"The 'Bat-Man,' a mysterious and adventurous figure fighting for righteousness and apprehending the wrong-doer. In his lone battle against the evil forces of society…his identity remains unknown."

Schwartz

continued from page 25

and Superman, there was a quality," he suggests. "Al Capp. Oh, God. About three to four times a year, Al would invite me to lunch. On the surface, Al Capp was a pretty vulgar guy, OK? But there were parts of him that were so brilliant. He was so goddamn bright. He did a column for an excellent British newspaper for years. I knew George McManus. I used to walk to work with him. He looked just like Jiggs. He had that whole appearance. He was a robust guy. Always smoked a cigar. Very cherubic. A sweet man. Man, could he draw! My greatest, greatest disappointment is that I knew Cliff Sterrett, and I never asked him for an original. I loved his work."

Realizing that these giants were not being filmed, Schwartz began videotaping informal talks with people like John Cullen Murphy, Len Starr, Mort Walker, Stan Drake and others for posterity. In 1981, Schwartz filmed a documentary on Milton Caniff, whose title he borrowed from that old biography he'd kept all these years, *Reflections of an Armchair Marco Polo*.

"Milton talks about movies," says Schwartz. "He drew his characters from films. In my video, he'll talk about the Dragon Lady as being Joan Crawford. If you read through what he was writing in that bio, he was Hitchcock. It's very interesting. More to the point, Hitchcock was famous for never going out. He didn't go on location. Everything was storyboarded. So what goes around comes around."

Roy Crane was another huge inspiration. "Roy Crane gave us sound back in 1926," Schwartz points out. "Pop! Pow! Sock! and Slam! When I was in the bullpen at King Features, I got to meet practically everybody who was doing features at that time. Crane would come up once or twice a year when he was doing *Buz Sawyer*. But he would never mix. And I thought, 'What a stuffed shirt.'"

Schwartz discovered differently when he went to Disney World in 1978 and took a chance. "The minute we got into the hotel room I called Crane and I asked if I could see him. He said, 'Who are you?' in his Texas drawl. I said, 'Well, do you have an NCS album? I'm in there. You can find out if you want to see me.' He called back and asked, 'Are you free now?' So I went over and I didn't get out for about three hours. I asked him about why Pop! Pow! Sock! and Slam? He said it used to frustrate him that he could draw what was happening, and you could see it, but you couldn't hear it."

Schwartz remains a big fan of Will Eisner. "There's a guy I hope I meet before I'm gone," he says. "I have such admiration for his intellect in terms of the way he has defined the whole business of cartoons and the cartooning art—at least the sequential aspect of it. Of all of them I have met, without a doubt, he is the most intelligent.

"I always said about the good ones," Schwartz reflects, "that no matter what Milton Caniff decided to do, he would have been great at it. And I'm sure that's true of Eisner. I've not so sure about Bob Kane! I can't tell you that. And I'm not glamorizing the time frame at all beyond the fact of my own feeling of luck to have known these guys.

"To give credit where credit is due," he concludes, "in the '60s I bumped into Bob one day. He had an apartment in Tudor City at that time. It was right after the TV show had been a smash success. Given his arrogance, he was almost humble about it. And he said, 'You know, it's like every 10-20 years, something comes up.' The fact is that's the way it went. But when you think about imagery, you can see the Superman logo lasting. But somehow that bat image is so powerful. I mean, if you were to get a group of psychologists into a room they could quickly explain the longevity of this whole thing. And it's legendary at this point. What lasts 50-60 years? You've got to be very good. Batman and Robin are icons. And they probably will remain icons."

POSTSCRIPT:

Curious about the supposed Bob Kane-Will Eisner collaboration *Dusty Diamond*, I contacted Eisner. Here is what he said:

"I didn't ever collaborate with either of them. Bob worked for me for a while. He did a thing called *Peter Pup*. As a matter of fact, I had nothing to do with Bob—not because we were angry but we walked separate paths—after World War II. After I got back from the Army, I never even saw Bob. He was busy working on Batman. I was busy doing the Spirit. I think there's a mistake here. It may have been an imitation of something I did. There was no collaboration. My memory is almost clear on this."

Responding to the fact that one of the *Dusty Diamond* supporting cast was a spoof on actress Jane Russell, whom Kane dubbed Jane Bussell, Eisner suggested, "I did do a thing on Jane Russell, a Spirit story called 'The Girl with the Big, Big Eyes.' Now maybe this was an imitation of that, or a takeoff."

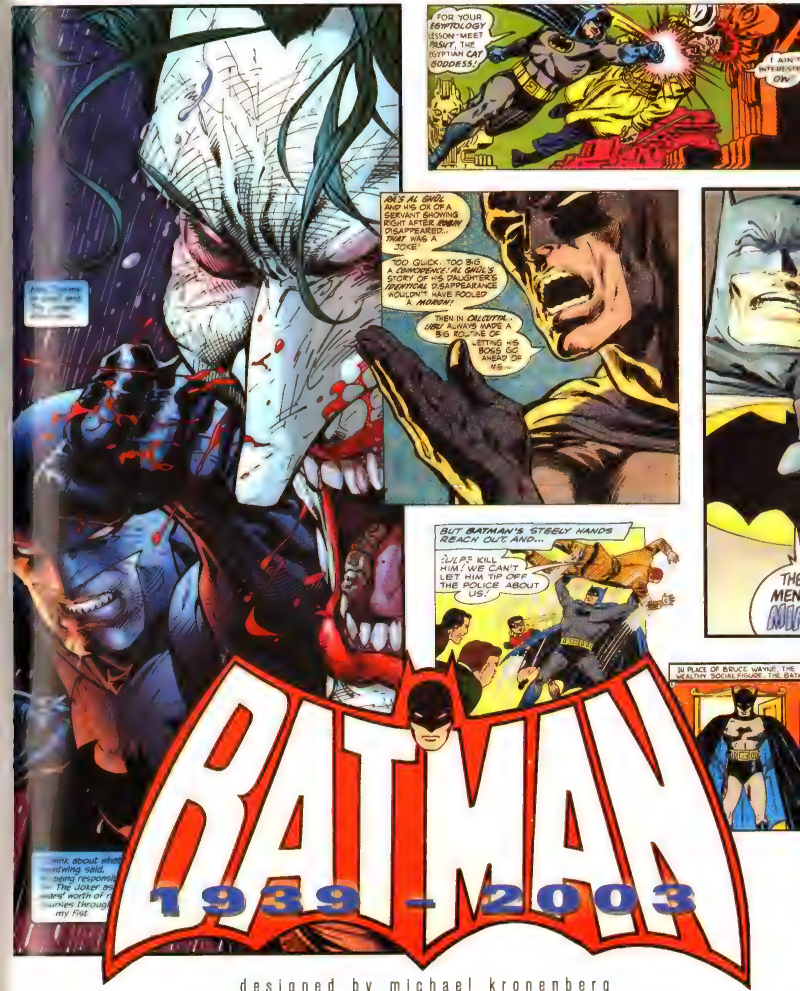
Concluding Eisner says, "It may have been a claim that Bob made, knowing Bob as I did. He was capable of doing that. Bob was a very difficult kind of guy in matters like that. If he would swipe something, he'd claim that someone collaborated with him. The word inspiration in Bob's dictionary was a little bit stronger than just being influenced."

Apprised of Eisner's comments, Lew Schwartz adds:

"Having since met Will Eisner, I am awed by his great talent, intellect, and energy. During the Eisner Awards dinner at San Diego, I had the great honor of having Will hand me a lifetime achievement award. You don't lose your heroes. As for *Dusty Diamond*, I worked with Kane on that almost entirely by mail, and had no contact with Eisner during that period. I think that considering Eisner's stature and achievements, what Kane had to say is of no consequence."

"I should add that my feelings about the comics industry relate to having known people like Caniff, Raymond, Crane, Foster, Capp, etc. How lucky a guy I was to have been there at that time. I guess it's true, you never give up your heroes."

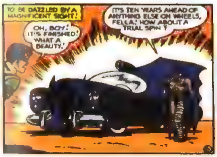
comic book marketplace presents


FOR YOUR EGYPTOLOGY LESSON-MEET PASUT, THE EGYPTIAN CAT GODDESS!
I AIN'T INTERESTED! OW
AL'S AL GHUL AND HIS OX OF A SERVANT SHOWING RIGHT AFTER RA'S DISAPPEARED... THAT WAS A JOKE!
TOO QUICK. TOO BIG. A COINCIDENCE. AL GHUL'S STORY OF HIS DAUGHTER'S IDENTICAL DISAPPEARANCE WOULDN'T HAVE FOOLED A MORON!
THEN IN CALCUTTA... UBU ALWAYS MADE A BIG SCENE OF GETTING HIS BOSS GO AHEAD OF HIS...
BUT BATMAN'S STEELY HANDS REACH OUT AND...
JULIP'S KILL HIM, WE CAN'T LET HIM TIP OFF THE POLICE ABOUT US!
IN PLACE OF BRUCE WAYNE, THE WEALTHY SOCIAL FIGURE, THE BAT-
BATMAN
1939 - 2003

designed by michael kronenberg

All art © 2003 DC Comics. Batman TM & © DC Comics.

Detective COMICS
Detective COMICS
Detective COMICS
Robin
BAT-MAN
BAT-MAN
BAT-MAN
AND AN EERIE FIGURE DROPS FROM THE SKY
I'M THE BATMAN! I WANT TO HELP YOU GET THOSE MURDERERS! THEY'VE PUT A PRICE ON THE THREE'S HEADS! BUT YOU CAN'T GO TO THE POLICE -- COME WITH ME! AND I'LL TELL YOU WHY
WHA... WHO?...
NOW IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO. THERE'LL BE QUESTIONS AND THAT MIGHT MEAN THE END OF THE BATMAN'S SECRET IDENTITY!
LOOK! LOOK AGAIN! A FACE DIVIDED INTO BEAUTY AND UNLIKELY QUIRKY FRIGHTENING. ISN'T IT?
BATMAN!
YOU!?
HA HA HA HA HA HA
LAUGH! LAUGH! THE LAST EVER HEARD! I HAVE SWORN TO KILL THE VILLAINS WHO MURDERED MY PARENTS AND NOW, LAUGH! THE LAUGH OF THE BATMAN!
SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HIM! I'M... I'M...
FATHER? MOTHER?
I KNOW! BECAUSE I AM THE SON OF THE MAN WHO MURDERED... I AM BRUCE WAYNE!!
BAT MAN
1939 - 1949

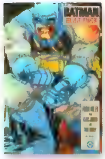


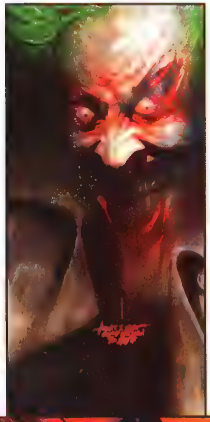
BATMAN

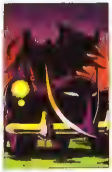
1950 - 1959

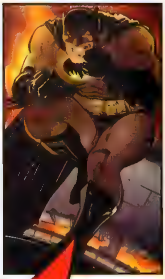
DETECTIVE
DETECTIVE
BATMAN KILLER!
DETECTIVE
BATMAN
BATMAN
BATMAN
GREAT BULLDOGGING, BATMAN!
BATMAN!... HE'S ALIVE!
GREAT HEAVENS! LOOKS LIKE CLAY!
SLOWLY, THE INTRUDER LIFTS HIS HEAD TO GREET THE ONLOOKERS WITH A STUNNING SIGHT...
SEE YOU SOCK IT TO YA, BABY!
SOCK!
I GOT HER.
ME TOO. WHATTA WE DO NOW?
A NICK TO DRAW THIS ONE.
TO PUT THE QUESTION MORE ACCURATELY--- "WHATTA WE DO--- NOW" THAT BATMAN AND ROBIN ARE
LOOK FOR YOURSELV
CRIME CHAMPIONS!
BATMAN
1960-1969

Detective Comics
100 PAGES 60¢
Detective COMICS
DETECTIVE
BATMAN'S
100 BIG PAGES 100¢
WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-HEROES
BATMAN
BAT MAN
BAT MAN
HAHAHAHA
BAT MAN
1970 - 1979



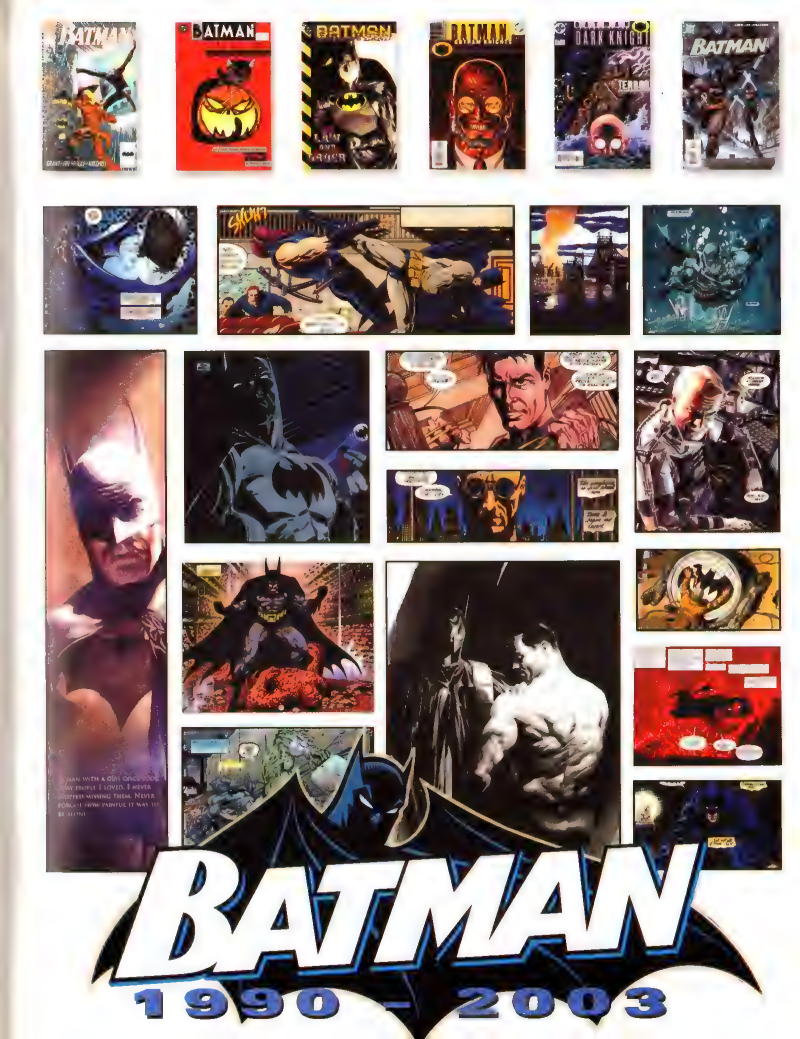






BATMAN

1980 - 1989


BATMAN
BATMAN
BATMAN
LAW AND DISORDER
BATMAN
BATMAN
DARK KNIGHT
TERROR
BATMAN
SABBAT
BATMAN
1990 - 2003

NEAL ADAMS

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE INTERVIEW:

NEAL ADAMS

a candid conversation with the legendary artist who brought gritty realism to batman

by Michael Kronenberg

*In April of 1971, at the age of eight, I stepped into my local 7-11 in Miami, Florida. After getting myself a Slurpee to cool off on that hot day, I went to the comic book rack to check out my favorite comic—*Batman. *There was the new issue, but this cover looked different. Batman looked stronger, more athletic. He looked realistic. Robin was being shot by an unknown assailant, and a malevolent, new villain (drawn in, what…pencil?) loomed in the background. I grabbed the comic and headed home in anticipation. By the time I got there, the wheels were set in motion to change my life forever. I had never before seen comic book art like this. For the first time, I took notice of the credits for a comic. They read "Pencil art by Neal Adams." From that moment on, I would look for that name in a comic, and I was quickly able to distinguish Adams' style from other artists. This commenced a lifelong love of comic book art and, eventually, art in general. Soon after, I started drawing (mostly copying Adams' work). Eventually, I studied art in college. I had a successful stint as a fine artist and later became an art director. And it all started with* Batman *#232. Countless other artists with similar stories also have been inspired by Neal Adams. His influence is widespread, from comic books to the movie industry to amusement parks. The man is a legend. Therefore, when Russ told me that CBM was dedicating an issue to the history of Batman, one person came to mind.*

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I visited Neal's Continuity Studios in early May. Continuity occupies an entire floor of a midtown Manhattan office building. Equipped with all the latest computer equipment, Neal and his talented staff (including daughters Kris and Zeea and son Jason) create everything from animated storyboards and advertising illustrations to movie concepts and amusement park designs. I already knew Neal was a brilliant artist, but, after meeting him, I found out he is a truly generous person with a great sense of humor and a keen intellect. We spoke at length about his upcoming graphic novel/multi-media project concerning the earth's origins (more about this in an upcoming issue

of CBM). His enthusiasm and joy for this project (which has occupied 30 years of his life) showed me that his creative fire still burns strong. Neal's revival of Batman from the sixties TV buffoon to the dark, obsessed warrior of crime marks a turning point for the character and for the comic book industry. Every artist who has followed him owes a debt of gratitude to Neal Adams.

CBM: You helped Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster receive their due.

Adams: Well, I don't know that they got their due.

CBM: You helped them receive as much as they could possibly get, and you certainly worked hard. Do you think that Bob Kane was given too much credit, while Kane and DC may have slighted Bill Finger?

Adams: In all honesty, you must understand, I never talk about things I don't know anything about. And I don't really know much about Bill Finger. I think that any creator is worth what he creates, and it seems to me that Bob Kane's mom showed up at the right time to work out a good deal for Bob Kane.

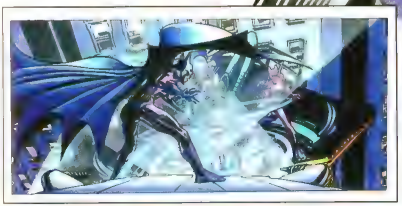
Even though he was busy approving work for clients and finishing illustrations for deadlines, Neal was his jovial, loquacious, and patient self during our interview.

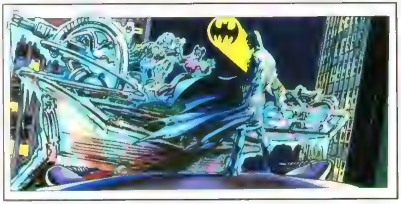
The Dark Knight back to his roots: Neal's beautiful homage to Bob Kane's 1939 *Detective Comics* cover.

CBM: It seems that *Detective Comics* #27-37 (1939-40) when Batman first appeared was an influence on you, as if you were going back to the character's roots. Is that true?

Adams: The truth is that, when I presented Batman to DC Comics, and I didn't get to present it to the Batman editor (Julius Schwartz), I got to present it to the *Brave and the Bold* editor (Murray Boltinoff), I think my attitude as to how the character should be portrayed was exemplified in my conversation with Julie Schwartz. I had asked to work on Batman many times and he turned me down. So I drew Batman for several issues in Boltinoff's *Brave and the Bold*. Letters poured into DC Comics saying and asking, "Why is the only 'good' Batman the one in *Brave and the Bold*?" Under this barrage of fan mail Julie finally offered to let me draw for the regular Batman titles. In our hallway chat as he offered me the Batman work Julie finally said, and with some annoyance, "Why is it, Neal, that you think you

know how to do Batman and all the rest of us don't?" What I said to Julie at the time, and I would repeat it now, is that, "It's not that I know what Batman should be, it's that I and every kid in America know what Batman should be." It just didn't seem like the people at DC Comics knew what Batman ought to be. So I didn't think of what I did as being anything really spectacular. When I was a little kid, when I was like ten and eleven years old, I started to make a Batman encyclopedia for myself, where I traced drawings and copied drawings. I wrote on the bottoms the various characteristics of the various characters and I wrote about the Batmobile and all the other things. And I guess I did about ten pages before I dropped from kid exhaustion. For a ten or eleven year old kid that was already a big deal, and I don't think anything in those pages doesn't exemplify what I think Batman is all about. I don't blame the people at DC. I think the TV show ran roughshod over the Batman character and DC Comics followed suit. I don't think it's a surprise to anybody what Batman is





ABOVE: A previously unpublished drawing of the Masked Manhunter. LEFT: Two of Neal's concept drawings for the Batman amusement park ride.

about. It's just sometimes you lose track of things. The movies lost it, and maybe never had it. I think that's the way it is with people. There are influences that come along that take your mind and switch it around and then make you think things that you never would have thought if you didn't have all these influences.

CBM: It seems the people at National had become incredibly stodgy.

Adams: Well, I wouldn't necessarily say that. I think the world had become kind of stodgy. I think we had fought our communists and fought our parents who thought that rock and roll should be.... I mean, you must understand, I come from the time when, I believe it was the Governor of New Jersey went on the air and destroyed rock and roll records; when

continued on page 58

CATWOMAN!
HUSH

BATMAN

BATMAN

BATMAN

BATMAN
JUNGLE

BATMAN

BATMAN

BATMAN

BATMAN

BATMAN

Loeb and Lee: Batman Forever?

by Jennifer M. Contino

Scribe Jeph Loeb and artist Jim Lee have been making headlines everywhere and garnering critical acclaim for their run on Batman called "Hush." The twelve-part adventure is nearing its September conclusion, but this isn't the end for the two creators. Loeb and Lee initially signed on to do just a dozen issues, but DC Comics recently announced the dynamic duo was staying on past the "Hush" arc. Tentatively they have another six-part story in the works, but were a little cryptic on the details, however they were very revealing and forthcoming on answers to most of our questions.

CBM: When you were younger, whom did you like more: Batman or Robin? Why?

Jeph Loeb: Well, in either case, I didn't run around in my pajamas fighting crime [laughs]. My guess is more like Robin, only in that I have more of a "This is Fun" attitude. I was never the brooding type. I could be as obsessed about something as Bats, but Robin was all about the center stage. So, no wallflower, me. But, I wasn't a sidekick and those green short pants would have been ... uncomfortable. This is a strange question for men, you know!

Jim Lee: If I had to pick between Batman and Robin, it would be Batman. I spent a lot of time hunched over on gargoyles overlooking St. Louis [laughs]. As a nine year old, I remembered watching Adam West as Batman every Bat-afternoon and just loving the show. I never saw it as a comedy...I thought all the tech was totally cool, especially the Batmobile, and of course, I had a crush on Batgirl. As a kid, I think I just gravitated more to the intellectual characters of groups...like Spock, the Beast, Antman, Cyclops...so Batman fit the bill since he was and is, as they say, the world's greatest detective.

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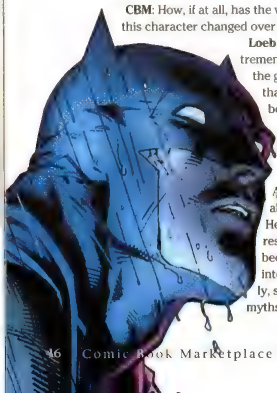
CBM: What do you think it is about the character of Batman that has allowed him to withstand the tests of time and still remain as popular now as he was in *Detective Comics* #27?

Loeb: I don't think it can be defined as one thing. Pop culture icons are very hard to pinpoint—if we knew what made them work, we'd have more of them. There are certainly things about his character—that notion that if we trained hard and worked toward a specific goal, it would be possible to *be* Batman. Jerry Seinfeld once said, "The difference between men and women is that growing up, men don't see Spider-Man and Batman as fictional heroes, they are career options." I'd like to think there's a wonderful "romantic" notion too and when I say that, I mean in the heroic sense. He is, after all, the Dark Knight and knights are by their nature, romantic.

Lee: I think there is a great benefit to being one of the first. And Batman is a thoroughly modern character...a near mythic character of the city and of the night. And with the rise of inner city crime during the mid to late 1900s, he tapped into a very real and growing fear of urban lawlessness. At the same time, his origin, his almost primordial need to avenge the deaths of his parents is a powerful one. And he has great, colorful villains. All the best, enduring characters have great villains.

While Croc was there all on a wild-goose chase, he picked up the money and I went after the mutagen
I NEED THAT MONEY
WAM
I thought I had two minutes before Croc would get back and find the boy was missing
BRAK
Batman battles a mutated version of Killer Croc in *Batman* #608.



CBM: How, if at all, has the way you regard this character changed over the years?

Loeb: He's changed tremendously through the generations and that's all part of being an icon. These characters are the myths of today. And just the stories from Ancient Greece about Zeus and Hercules and the rest of the gang have been changed and interpreted differently, so have our myths—our heroes.

Without going back to the '30s, '40s and '50s, the easiest to point to are the Carmine Infantino days when the book was more like the Adam West television series, more camp, more cartoony. Then, you look at Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams and you get the beginnings of the larger than life, dark, romantic character. Frank Miller turned it all very dark and solitary and violent—even fascist by some people's readings. Steve

Jeph Loeb hopes that one day the "Hush" storyline will be remembered as fondly as the O'Neil/Adams and Englehart/Rogers versions of Batman.

Batman and Catwoman make preparations for a battle with a brain-washed Superman in *Batman* #612.

Englehart and Marshall Rogers had their take which was very nostalgic and yet somehow kept the romantic nature. It's about the times we live in and how that affects both the readers and the creators.

Lee: It probably hasn't changed too much for me, which is to say that the character and I have really grown up together. There was never a *Dark Knight Returns* for me when I was a kid. And even as a teenager, I didn't spend a lot of time analyzing and intellectualizing my love for comics so the character always seemed modern and relevant to me. The stories just "spoke" to me, which is to say that as a nine year old, the Adam West *Batman* TV show seemed very "real" and serious. And that as a teenager, the Denny and Neal stories seemed to be appropriately and mysteriously dark and dreamy, romantic even. And that as a young adult, the edgy, modern take on Batman that Frank did on the Dark Knight Returns, was thoroughly reinvigorating. And the take Jeph and I are doing on Batman now is more postmodern. It's more chock full of classic super-heroics, more color, less

Batman chases down Harley Quinn in *Batman* #613.

Clues to his mysterious adversary leads Batman to a sword battle with Ra's al Ghul in North Africa, *Batman* #616.

ABOVE: Batman descends upon the Joker in *Batman* #614. **RIGHT:** Superman and Batman on more friendly terms in *Batman* #612.

brooding, yet still filled with menace, foreboding and suspense—which very much mirrors my own take on superheroes. As an adult and as a professional working in comics, I take the concept of super-heroes very seriously, yet at the same time I know how childlike and dreamlike the concepts can be. And I think Batman works on both those levels and has, in nearly every interpretation of the character.

CBM: Batman is an iconic character. What made telling a story in his "present" appealing to you?

Loeb: Well, first and foremost is working with Jim Lee and Scott Williams. I wouldn't tell a modern day story with Tim Sale, his style is more suited to the early period. But, like when I was on *Superman*, the responsibility to tell a story in continuity, in the present that moves the "ball downfield" is a wonderful challenge. It enhances the character for today and for today's readers. Hopefully, some of what we leave behind will have the same effect that Denny and Neal and Steve and Marshall had on me. Just to touch that would be fine.

Lee: As a kid, I loved the Justice League and I never thought Batman was out of place in that book. And while he didn't have any superpowers per se, he

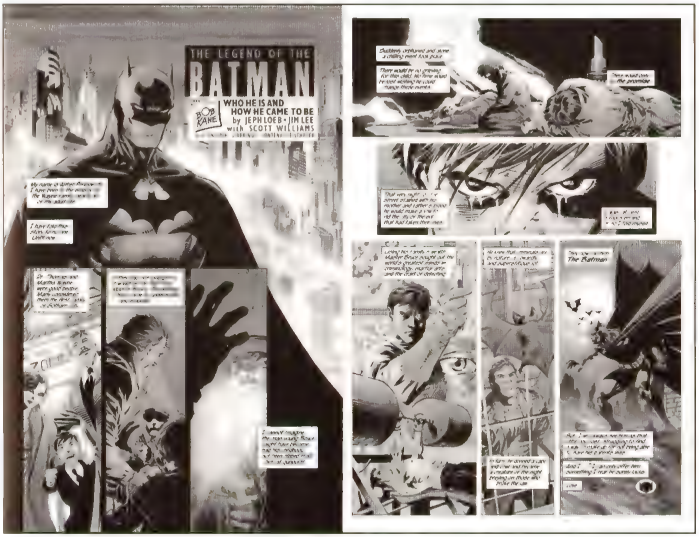
was the brains and often the voice behind the scene. It's an interpretation of Batman which I think had been largely shunned or ignored in his own title in more recent times so there seemed to be an opportunity there in my eyes—a chance to do a different, more classic version of Batman. But I also felt the more super-heroic Batman would only work if it were done with a writer who had a thorough grasp of what Batman is all about. Someone who could infuse a more super-heroic version of Batman with some of the melancholy and gravity the character also needed. And given what I had read of Jeph's previous work on the Dark Knight, I knew this run had a shot at working on a creative, thematic level. All of which is not to say I don't like the other takes on Batman. Quite the opposite. I love what Jeph and Tim did on Long Halloween and Dark Victory. And I wouldn't be working in comics today if it were not for the *Dark Knight Returns*. I just think that Batman is a big enough character to work on a number of different levels in many different ways.

CBM: What were your goals when you started this project? What did you want this story to be?

Loeb: My goals are what they always are—to tell the best story I can and hope folks like it. Folks seem to, so that's very rewarding. I wanted to tell a story that was best suited toward Jim's strengths and forge a partnership with him that would allow us to work together again someday. He's very smart and I like that—both as an artist and as a force in the comic book business. In terms of story, it's an adventure/mystery with a love story around it. I want to challenge Batman, but also give the readers a challenge. Is it a good yarn? That's what I want.

Lee: At the risk of being called arrogant, my goal in working on any character for an extended period of time is to do what is regarded as a definitive take on the character. Mind you, I said goal...that's what I shoot for...not necessarily achieve [laughter]...and what Jeph and I achieve on our run on Batman will be determined by the fans and critics at the

The "Hush" team tackles Batman's origin in the same tradition as Finger/Kane and O'Neil/Adams. DC Comics presented this as an internet exclusive, and then released it in the recent "Hush" hardcover collection.



COURTESY OF ALBERT MOY

Originally presented in *Wizard* magazine, Superman vs. Batman, from the original art.

end of the day. Furthermore, I think every creator worth his salt wants to do a take on a character which is memorable and exciting; I mean, that's why we do it, right? Personally, my other goal was to do the book on time and to do a healthy run on it. Jeph and I could have done a prestige format or graphic novel one-shot, but I like challenging people's expectations and public sentiment was that I could no longer meet deadlines. And frankly, there was a part of me who wanted to see for myself. So far, it's been a real pleasure—we push each other in doing our best each shot we get and it's been a great ride so far. Moreover, working with Jeph has given me a greater appreciation for the depth of his skills as a writer, and I've learned a lot about story, structure and pacing as a side benefit of working with him. Every line, every scene moves the story along (even if it's not immediately apparent and often in the most understated of ways), and he's done an amazing job of engaging the reader into the mystery of who the villain is, which is no mean feat these days with the access fans have to upcoming material via Diamond Previews and the Internet.

CBM: How have your ideas or vision for the direction "Hush" and Batman should take changed since you began working on the monthly?

Loeb: Not much. What is different about this project is that most of it was done when the first issue hit the stands. So, it's more like a movie—you spend a year to a year-and-a-half in production and then the movie opens. You can't go back and change something because the audience is not responding. Fortunately, the audience is responding and favorably, so that's a smile.

Lee: There is the distinct disadvantage of working ahead so early which is that you don't get to play to the audience, but the payoff is that you get your book out on time which was one of the primary goals of the project. I think so-called hot artists have been justifiably and charitably labeled as flakes in recent years because of their inability to get books out on time. So working ahead took priority in this case. And I think there is some danger in playing to the crowd. Given most of the fan feedback is from the Internet these days and that the fans on the net are not necessarily representative of the overall fan base, I think there is a danger of being reactive rather than proactive and telling the story you want to tell. And to Jeph's credit, I think he set up his game play and while there have been some audibles here and there, mostly in which characters appear, the overall story is pretty much what he laid out.

CBM: What is "Hush?"

Loeb: It's a 12-part mystery story taking place in the regular monthly *Batman* comic. It involves an unknown person or persons who is/are intersecting in various places in Batman's life and the tumult that's been caused from that. And then, there's a romance going on with Catwoman that's ... unexpected. It involves nearly all of the Batman family (Nightwing, Robin, Alfred, Oracle, Batgirl, Gordon, etc.) and much of the

The Joker nearly drives Batman over the edge in this two page spread from *Batman* #612, from the original art.

COURTESY OF ALBERT MOY

LEFT: Who is the mysterious bandaged man from *Batman* #615. ABOVE: Bruce Wayne's childhood friend, Dr. Tommy Elliot re-emerges to save Wayne's life after a near deadly fall.

rogues gallery (Killer Croc, Poison Ivy, Harley Quinn, Joker, Riddler, Ra's Al Ghul ... it goes on). And Superman.

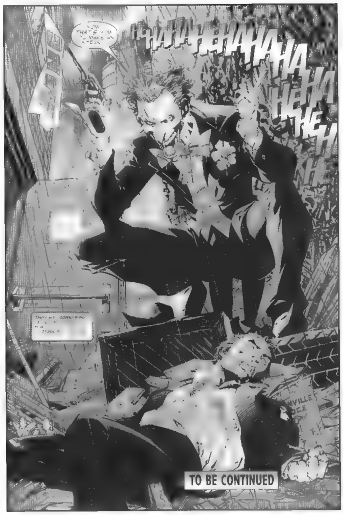
Lee: "Hush" is a story about a mysterious, powerful villain who is masterminding a grand plan to bring about the defeat of Batman. Not just in a physical way but in a psychological way. It started last October and wraps up this September. Funner than falling out of a tree—guaranteed!

CBM: So far in "Hush" we've seen some of Batman's classic friends and foes, what new characters will you be introducing into the mix? If none, why not? If you are introducing new characters, what inspired each creation?

Loeb: The most significant is the introduction of Tommy Elliot who is a childhood friend of Bruce's. He embodies much of what Bruce was not as a child and, in turn, how these two men echo each other as adults. He's a brilliant surgeon and, not so coincidentally, has the same name as Bruce's father who was also a surgeon. Oh, and the Joker killed him in the seventh issue. That surprised a lot of people, but that's what happens in Batman's life.

Loeb: Aside from Tommy Eliot and the new villain Hush, there are no other new characters. Given the complexity of

In a flashback, Tommy and Bruce play a war game, *Batman* #609, ink wash by Jim Lee.



In *Batman* #613 the Joker shoots and kills Tommy Elliot, or does he?

the story, it would be unwieldy to introduce more characters than that. The story is about developing Hush as a major villain in the Batverse and the entire run ultimately has been about Hush's motivations and machinations.

CBM: Who were some of your artistic influences while working on this project?

Lee: Gosh, it would be anyone and everyone who has worked on Batman. Each artist brings something different or new to the look of Batman and the world he lives in and you tend to look at everyone's work, and not necessarily for a way of handling something like Batman's ears or his utility belt but often just for inspiration. Getting across a feeling or an emotion through images is the hardest part of the job and I think it's helpful to look to material which inspired you as a fan to find it within yourself to achieve similar goals. Artists as diverse as Dick Sprang, Neal Adams, David Mazzachelli, Frank Miller, Jim Aparo, David McKean, Mike Mignola, Don Newton, Kevin Nowlan and Steve Englehart. If I had to pick one thought, I'd pick Adams and Miller [laughter]...what can I say, they were and still are the best.

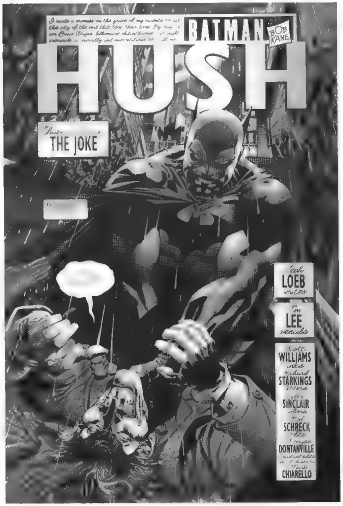
CBM: What have been some of the biggest challenges so far working on "Hush?"

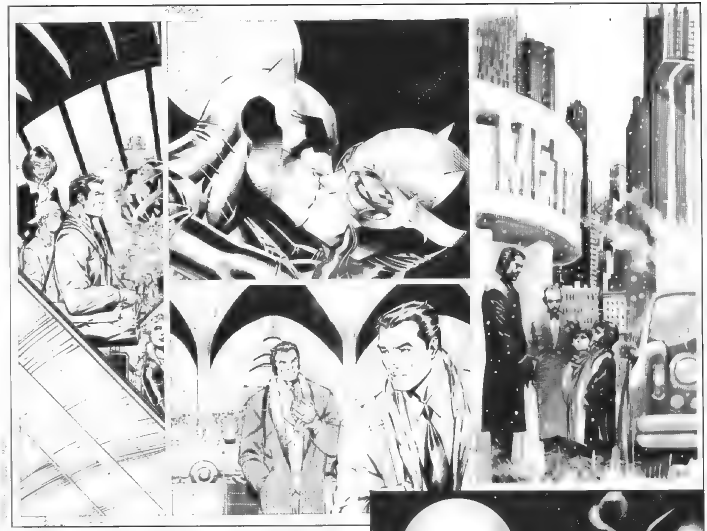
Loeb: Keeping myself from buying all the artwork [laughs]. I don't know. My brain doesn't work like that. It's not about challenges, it's about joy. This is fun. We're doing Batman and people like it. Jim draws amazing pictures that I like to look at. Tarring roofs is challenging, it's hard, sweaty work that smells bad. This isn't that.

Lee: Having Jeph tell me how much better Tim would have handled every scene [laughter]. I'm just kidding. One of Jeph's skills is writing to his partner's strengths. I guess Jeph is telling me I shouldn't draw quiet scenes

BELOW: The Batman savagely beats and nearly kills the Joker in *Batman* #614. RIGHT: Jim Lee's ink wash flashback of Jason Todd's death, *Batman* #614.

COURTESY OF ALBERT MOY





RIGHT: Batman and Catwoman's kiss sparks their romantic interlude. *Batman* #610. ABOVE: From the original art, *Batman* #611.

[laughter]. Seriously, though, at first it was tricky handling the large, high-octane scenes Jeph was feeding me. I've worked with big images before and on books with short panel counts but some of the *Batman* issues are handled in relatively few panels. However, there's still a lot going on in the story and that required me to put a lot into each panel. Meaning there are often several things going on or established in each panel, on each page. And because Batman is a character which is very much a part of his environment, you can't cheat as much with your backgrounds, and I've often had to lay out overviews of entire scenes to make sure the environments didn't change too much from panel to panel, page to page, scene to scene, issue to issue.

CBM: What were some of the toughest elements of the Bat mythos to render? How did you overcome the challenges?

Lee: Drawing any character for the first time can be challenging because your first take is rarely the way he will finally look, but you have to go through the rough initial phase

The Opera.
Oddly enough, it was my father's passion and not my mother's.
THAT'S BRUCE AND SELINA, AND LESLIE WITH HER BOY, GIRL, BOY GIRL
While my father chafed at the idea of literature and cinema being introduced into my life courtesy of my mother --
"What's the use of filling the boy's head with useless imaginary things?" he was apt to say --
-- he had no such reservations when it came to the works of Verdi, Puccinni, and especially, Leoncavallo.

LEFT: Tommy Elliot, Leslie Thomkins, Selina Kyle, and Bruce Wayne attend the opera in *Batman* #613. **ABOVE:** The new Batmobile roars across a bridge in Gotham City, *Batman* #615.

to get to the sweet spot as it were, when it just flies off your pencil and you don't have to "think" about it as much. When I first started drawing Batman, I had to figure out how dark is his costume, how much of it do I want to reveal, how wide are his shoulders, how long are his ears, how big is his belt...umm this is sounding a little odd [laughter] but because I had drawn Batman a bit before the run, it wasn't that hard to get a handle on it...about four issues [laughter]. I had far less time for characters like the Joker who I had never drawn before, but once I figured out how to make his super exaggerated features fit within the context of my pseudo-realistic style, it was fairly easy and a blast drawing. Now in fact, I would say he is the most fun and the easiest character in Batman to draw, hands down.

CBM: Did you feel at all intimidated to be working on this character? If so, how hard is it to overcome feelings like that? *If* not, why? What did you think about the chance to do this?

Lee: It was intimidating to work on a character which had been handled so well by so many of the greats. But that motivates me to do my best. In my life, I've been intimated by many, many things but I've never let those kinds of feelings hamper or impede my goals and my own expectations of myself. This is our shot to do our take on Batman, and if we fail with Hush, it won't be because we didn't give it our all. Jeph and I sweat the smallest of details and push each other to do our best each and every issue if not every page.

CBM: How well are you collaborating with the other creators on this project?

Loeb: Well, I don't know what *they* think, but I'd like to think that's one of my strengths. I like to work with Jim, Scott, Alex and Richard. We comment and critique each other, we help each other—it *is* a team in the best sense of the word. But, it's that way on all the books I work on or I don't want to work on them. The idea of writing a story and handing it to the editor and then seeing it on the stands is very curious to me—but I know that's how many writers do their job and how it has been done for decades. It's just not me and that's probably got more to do with my background as a film and television writer which is a total collaborative process. Seems to work. Ain't broke, as they say...

Lee: It's a veteran team, from top to bottom, side to side. From editor Bob Schreck to Scott Williams to Richard Starkings to Alex Sinclair to production VP Alison Gill...we all know how to do our jobs and aren't squeamish about speaking up when things need to be better. In fact, that was the "precondition" to being part of the team—we're all willing to change things to make the book the best it can be. And to Scott Williams' credit, I often don't even look at the inked pages until they are printed. I know how good he is and working with him and Alex Sinclair has only made the work look better. You couldn't come up with a better team. And to his credit, Jeph always tweaks the scripts after the book's drawn to make sure the dialogue jibes with the art which also makes me look better, so hat's off to Jeph.

Nightwing consoles Batman after his near-fatal attack on the Joker, *Batman* #615.

CBM: There were a lot of concerns about you being able to meet deadlines with your large Wildstorm workload and duties there. How hard has it been to tackle this project alongside of all your other responsibilities?

Lee: It's something I discussed with my wife beforehand. We both knew how much time it takes to draw a page and that I would have to sacrifice evenings and weekends to put in "overtime" when I couldn't get a chance to draw because of my other responsibilities. And she knew how important it was to me and why I wanted to take on the challenge. So having her support and help has allowed me to bear down when I needed to get the work done. It's hard work in that it's a lot of hours. There's no way to scrimp and save time—your style is your style and if you slough off on one panel or page, it will look out of place with the rest of the book. That being said, I think the best issues were done in the shortest amounts of time. It's just easier for me to draw on a regular basis—meaning everyday—rather than intermittently. And despite the seeming contradiction, I think it's easier for me to do a monthly book rather than an open-ended, unscheduled special project.

The ground at the ring looks like rubber!
I'VE STOPPED A BEAM TO A WALL, A SPEED TRAIN, A HEART—
BUT NOTHING—THIS FELT LIKE NOTHING!
WHAM

Thanks to Batman's Green Kryptonite ring, he's able to dish out some punishment to Superman in *Batman* #612.

CBM: It was recently announced that you would be doing work beyond the initial 12-issue "Hush" project. What made you want to continue on with this title?

Loeb: Jim; the response from the crowd. The story I want to do next seems different from "Hush" and Jim responded to it and DC responded to it. We'll see.

Lee: Having been in this business as long as I have, I know a good thing when I see it. And working with the entire creative team has been a real joy so when we had a chance to do more,

ABOVE and LEFT: Dual unmasking, Batman reveals his secret identity to Catwoman and the man with the bandages turns out to be Harvey Dent with his face restored to normal, *Batman* #615 and #616.

it was a no-brainer as far as I'm concerned to say yes. And the fact that Jeph had another story idea already fired up meant we could jump from Hush right away to the next project.

CBM: How does it feel to have issues "sold out" or in second printings and bumper editions?

Loeb: Is there a wrong way to answer this question? [laughs] It's very rewarding. I'm sorry I keep using that phrase, but no one can predict a blockbuster and since I know what it's like to work on something that *isn't* well received [laughs] this is better. Much better!

Lee: It's fun. But at the expense of sounding ungrateful, I've felt the rush of that before back at Marvel and with Image. But what is different this time is that it's happening when the comics business is much smaller, more competitive and much more Spartan in its business practices so it's been that much more incredible a ride. It's not just because of hype—there's real demand by readers to get caught up in the storyline which is remarkable, especially when you consider the fact we live in a "I'll wait for the trade" world these days. I knew we'd do well and thought the sales would peak at 612, but the sales keep rising for every issue which has been awesome. I can't thank the retailers and fans enough for their support and enthusiasm for the book—it's made the whole experience a real pleasure.

CBM: What can you tell us of what's coming up in "Hush?"

Loeb: The rest of the story. We are going to do our best to tie up the loose ends. And yes, there will be a few things that will change in continuity for the better or worse that we can't "take back." It was very important to Jim and I that when the story was done, Batman readers wouldn't go, "Okay, now they hit the reset button and at #620, the new team comes in and ignores the entire story." There are some things that can't be ignored. There are some things that will happen by the time folks read this interview where it will be clearer what's at stake and who's responsible for what. What I will say is—and I'm sure Jim will kill me for saying this—but, it's *not* a dream, not a hoax, not an imaginary story. Folks have speculated that when Batman fell in #608, the first issue, he was knocked out, is in a coma and is dreaming this adventure. Nice idea, but not this story.

Lee: A finish no one will be expecting that will blow people away...that's what we're shooting for. I know I'm pulling out all the stops to make sure we didn't let up on the gas at the end.

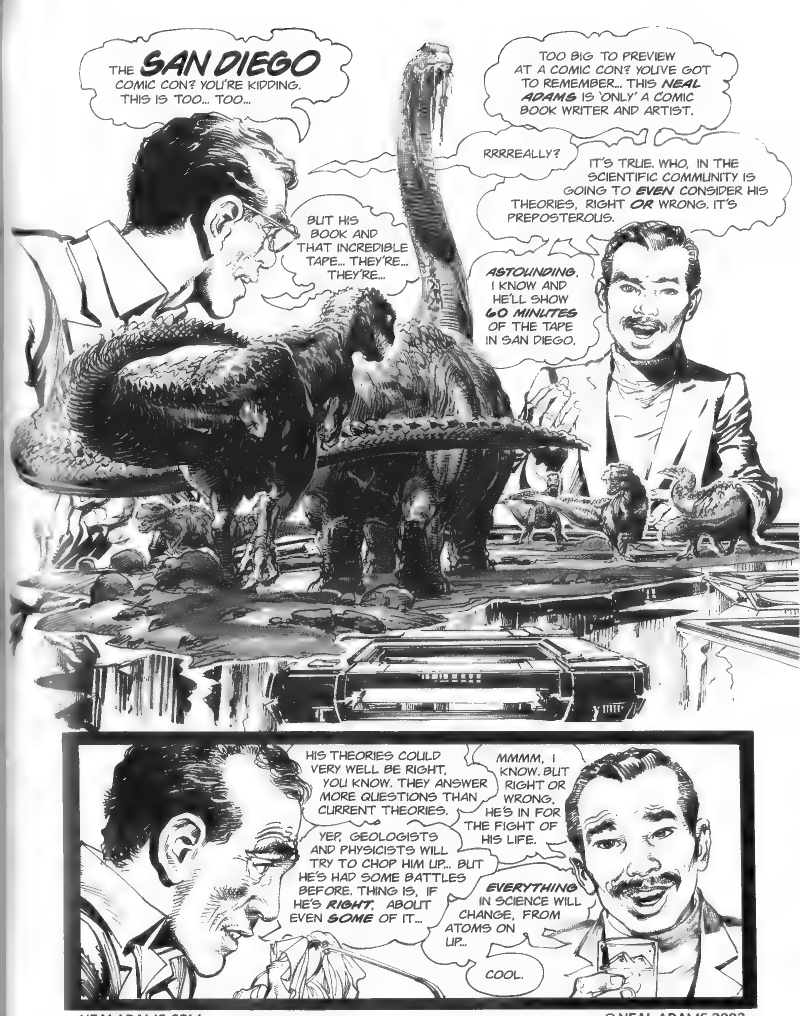
CBM: What's coming up for Batman after "Hush?"

Loeb: Jim and I and DC have spoken about doing another six-part arc. We're both anxious to begin, but, like with "Hush," want to make sure it is *all* there before we begin. As to details of the story... let's just say that certain things that have happened in "Hush" will have lasting effect and some of those things will be addressed in this next storyline.

COURTESY OF ALBERT MOY

In a flashback sequence, Bruce and Tommy witness the Golden Age Green Lantern battle The Icicle in Gotham City, *Batman* #611. From the original art, ink wash by Jim Lee.

Lee: Jeph has some real changes planned for Batman continuity, and it'll be fun to follow up on that with our subsequent storyline. Otherwise, more hard-hitting Batman fun, on bat-time and on bat-schedule.


THE SAN DIEGO COMIC CON? YOU'RE KIDDING. THIS IS TOO... TOO...
TOO BIG TO PREVIEW AT A COMIC CON? YOU'VE GOT TO REMEMBER... THIS NEAL ADAMS IS 'ONLY' A COMIC BOOK WRITER AND ARTIST.
RRRREALLY?
IT'S TRUE. WHO, IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY IS GOING TO EVEN CONSIDER HIS THEORIES, RIGHT OR WRONG. IT'S PREPOSTEROUS.
BUT HIS BOOK AND THAT INCREDIBLE TAPE... THEY'RE... THEY'RE...
ASTOUNDING. I KNOW AND HE'LL SHOW 60 MINUTES OF THE TAPE IN SAN DIEGO.
HIS THEORIES COULD VERY WELL BE RIGHT, YOU KNOW. THEY ANSWER MORE QUESTIONS THAN CURRENT THEORIES.
MMMM. I KNOW. BUT RIGHT OR WRONG, HE'S IN FOR THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE.
YEP. GEOLOGISTS AND PHYSICISTS WILL TRY TO CHOP HIM UP... BUT HE'S HAD SOME BATTLES BEFORE. THING IS, IF HE'S RIGHT, ABOUT EVEN SOME OF IT...
EVERYTHING IN SCIENCE WILL CHANGE, FROM ATOMS ON UP...
COOL.

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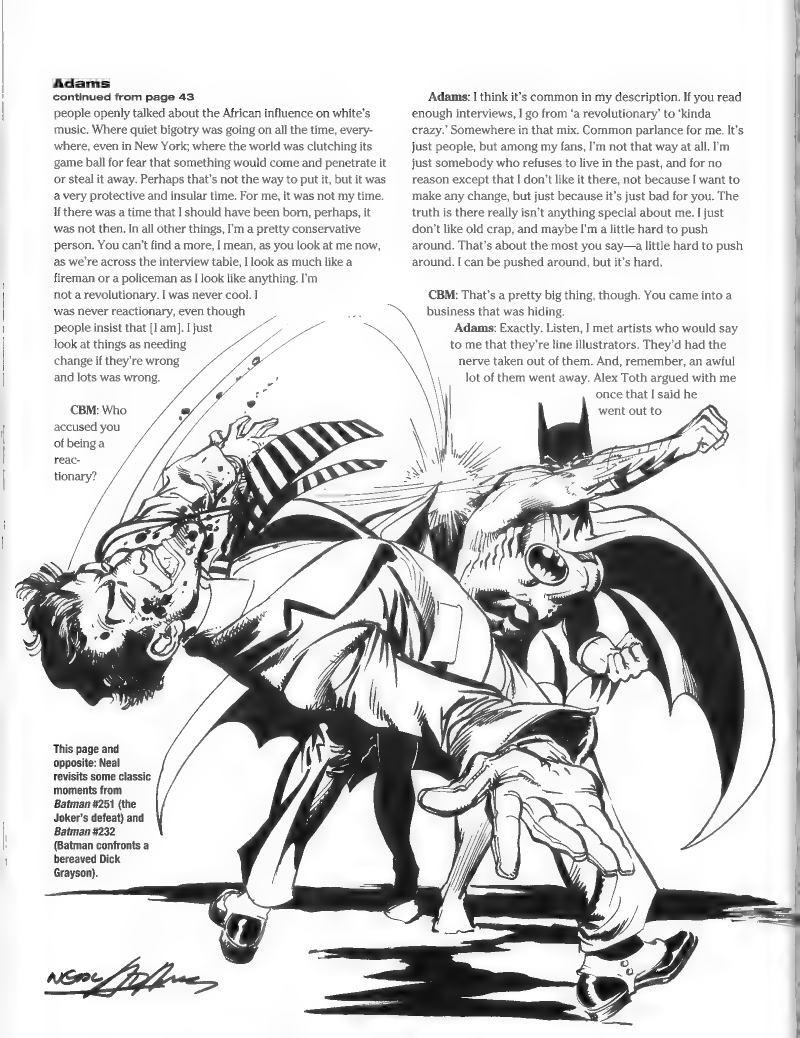
people openly talked about the African influence on white's music. Where quiet bigotry was going on all the time, everywhere, even in New York; where the world was clutching its game ball for fear that something would come and penetrate it or steal it away. Perhaps that's not the way to put it, but it was a very protective and insular time. For me, it was not my time. If there was a time that I should have been born, perhaps, it was not then. In all other things, I'm a pretty conservative person. You can't find a more, I mean, as you look at me now, as we're across the interview table, I look as much like a fireman or a policeman as I look like anything. I'm not a revolutionary. I was never cool. I was never reactionary, even though people insist that [I am]. I just look at things as needing change if they're wrong and lots was wrong.

CBM: Who accused you of being a reactionary?

Adams: I think it's common in my description. If you read enough interviews, I go from 'a revolutionary' to 'kinda crazy.' Somewhere in that mix. Common parlance for me. It's just people, but among my fans, I'm not that way at all. I'm just somebody who refuses to live in the past, and for no reason except that I don't like it there, not because I want to make any change, but just because it's just bad for you. The truth is there really isn't anything special about me. I just don't like old crap, and maybe I'm a little hard to push around. That's about the most you say—a little hard to push around. I can be pushed around, but it's hard.

CBM: That's a pretty big thing, though. You came into a business that was hiding.

Adams: Exactly. Listen, I met artists who would say to me that they're line illustrators. They'd had the nerve taken out of them. And, remember, an awful lot of them went away. Alex Toth argued with me once that I said he went out to



This page and opposite: Neal revisits some classic moments from *Batman* #251 (the Joker's defeat) and *Batman* #232 (Batman confronts a bereaved Dick Grayson).

Original pencil sketch to the previously unpublished drawing appearing on page 40.

Hollywood and went into cartoons. If Alex Toth wants to argue with me, then anything he says is fine as far as I'm concerned. Al Williamson, one of the greatest comic book artists ever—there's just no question, there's not even a conversation—did ghosting work for other comic strip artists who, in my opinion, were not as worthy as he was to do the strips that they did. You would see six-page stories in Dell, the most vanilla of comic book companies, by people like Wally Wood and my goodness, the best guys, and it was a terrible, terrible time. And it's not to say that the artists of DC were bad, but certainly they were especially blessed to get work. DC didn't make the effort to find the very best at that time. They let them go. And, if there's one thing that I won't forgive on a personal basis, it's DC's doing it. Not so much that they hurt the characters, they hurt the business by hiding and being babies, but it was a conscious decision and you have to respect it. *I* don't have to respect it. (laughs)

CBM: Okay, I'm going to give you a few names, and if you could just give me some quick opinions.

Adams: I generally don't have opinions, even though people think that I do have opinions. You will find, as you ask.

CBM: Okay, then, quick thoughts.

Adams: Alright.

CBM: Dick Sprang.

Adams: Loved his work when I was a kid. Love it. Absolutely. If I were doing a Batman series, I would love to do a Dick Sprang story. That would just knock me out.

CBM: Julius Schwartz.

Adams: You know, really truly, in my heart of hearts, I loved Julius Schwartz. He's a cantankerous and a difficult man to deal with, but my association with Julius, when I worked with him, was nothing but salutary. He made it hard for me, and that was fine. He was sort of a like the drill sergeant. So, in my heart, I really love the man.

CBM: Frank Miller.

Adams: I probably like Frank more than I should. And I do like him. He showed, to me, the most integrity and drive and stick-to-it-iveness of almost anybody I've ever met in comic books. When I first met him, it didn't seem to me that his artwork deserved the paper that it was drawn on, and he so proved me wrong that I stand in awe and wonder that he was able to do it. And he did it through grit and intelligence and ability and desire to become something more than just a good

Neal's first work on this title (*Detective Comics* #370, Dec 1967).

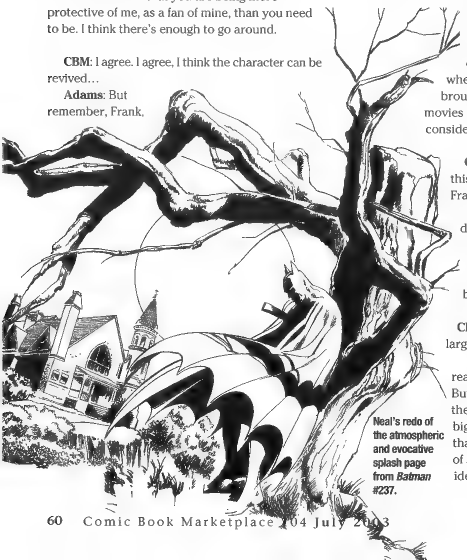
artist or even a reasonably good artist. He just became spectacular. So he's one of the surprises I had in my life. And I'm willing to admit that I've had a bunch of surprises. That's one of the biggest. Frank Miller is great.

CBM: Just to interject my opinion on this, a lot of times he's given maybe a little too much credit for reviving the character. That the character went from a jump of being silly in the '60s, and suddenly *The Dark Knight Returns* appeared. I've read that a little too much for my taste.

Adams: I think that you are being more protective of me, as a fan of mine, than you need to be. I think there's enough to go around.

CBM: I agree. I agree, I think the character can be revived…

Adams: But remember, Frank,



Neal's redo of the atmospheric and evocative splash page from *Batman* #237.

in his way, and he will tell you this too, wasn't doing Batman. Frank was doing a future Batman—an older man.

CBM: This is no slight against Frank Miller. It's my problem with the way it's viewed and the way the press specifically has viewed it.

Adams: You know, it's like a stone wall. There are some things you can't fight. People have opinions. Sort of like going on the Internet and trying to talk reasonably with people, and it doesn't matter if you're right. If they have something to say, they'll say it. At a certain point, you back away and inwardly feel, "I've got to go to this guy's house and confront this personally." But you genuinely can't do that.

CBM: You're right. Because that's the way it is.
Adams: Frank has done great work on Batman.

CBM: I agree. I absolutely agree. And I actually liked his new *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* that received a lot of criticism…

Adams: I'll tell you something else that's important too. And I think, for fans, it's very important. He's brought more attention to Batman, which is to all our benefits because it increases the possibility of another movie. When he did the first Batman that he did, it really made Hollywood look at Batman. I mean, I may have taken the onus of the television show off Batman and taken him someplace other than where he was, which was good, but Frank, I think, brought the eyes back to Batman as a possibility for movies and new television shows, all kinds of stuff. So I consider him in some ways my partner in crime.

CBM: Yes, but I think there are steps to where this character has gone. There wouldn't be what Frank is doing without what you had done.

Adams: I don't misunderstand what you say. I don't disagree with what you say. On the other hand, I think that there are shades. And I think we would be unhappy if Frank's contribution wasn't there. And Frank appreciates my contribution. You might ask him.

CBM: Alex Ross. Did you see his *War on Crime*, the large book that he did with Batman?

Adams: I saw it. To be perfectly honest, I didn't read it. I started to read it. And I love Alex's stuff. But I sort of like Alex a little bit more when he's in the trenches with us than when the pictures get too big and it becomes art. When you get those pages that are like five panels on a page and only a couple of spreads, which come out as surprise and new ideas and concepts that he's done and he's done a

bunch of those. These big, glossy pieces that are two panels on a page or one panel, for whatever reason, they feel a little bit more like coloring books. Believe me, I've flipped through them and I've looked at the art, and I love the art. I love Ross. I really, really love his work, but it's a format that I don't feel is—how shall I put it?—comic book-ish. And there's been a bunch of those.

CBM: Yeah, he's done one for the DC icon characters.

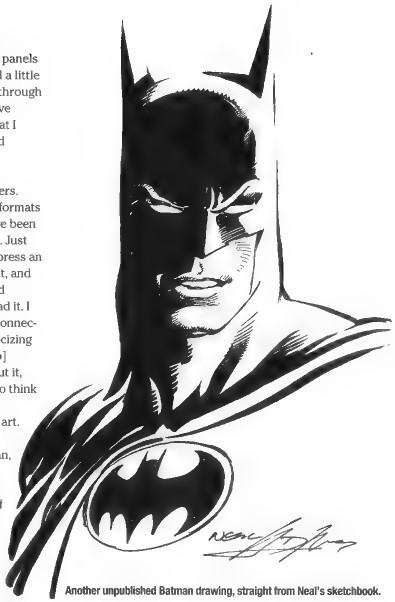
Adams: I don't quite get it. But look at the different formats that are out there. Look at the different things that have been done and they all find an audience one way or another. Just for me, you know? And I don't feel it's fair for me to express an opinion about this. All my opinion is that I didn't read it, and there was something that made me not read it. I flipped through it and looked at the art, and I didn't care to read it. I don't think of it past that. I have difficulty making the connection between the fact that I didn't read a book and criticizing it. I didn't read it. It seemed like a gut thing. If I [want to] criticize then I actually have to sit down and think about it, which means that I have to go and read it. And I have to think about what happened when I read it. In this case, I just didn't get that far. I just looked at the art. I enjoyed the art.

CBM: But you do enjoy his interpretation of Batman, the way he paints Batman?

Adams: As a variation. I feel a little strongly about Batman. And I don't like everybody's interpretation of Batman. I think Alex's is one of the best. But, in my opinion, since the movies haven't done Batman right, I think there's a time where we jumped into the variations before we got it. We're doing the variations. If it were just Alex, I'd say, "Hey, great. It's fine." But there's too many people screwing around with the character and so many variations that diminish the quality of the character, in my opinion, and don't make it something that one can sufficiently respect.

Neal's first work on this title (*Batman* #200, Mar 1967).

For example, even though Scott McDaniel's style is off the beaten track, he's still approached Batman very sincerely and has made what I consider to be Batman. It's a gymnastic, powerful Batman. His ears are a little bit short, but, you know, that's fine. It just seemed to me there was a solid attempt at doing Batman. He wasn't changing the logo on his chest, it was just basically doing Batman. I liked that. I just don't like the variations, because the variations go too far. It's like, you pick up one Batman book and you pick up another Batman book, and I don't know if it's the same character. Well, you know, that doesn't sound right to me. I think that represents an overall criticism of the way DC treats its characters. People originally criticized Warner for making DC Comics stick to Batman and stick to Superman and not change them and mess around with them. Because they were taking them into the movies. While they were protecting those characters in a businesslike way, a lot of people at DC Comics were complaining and generally acting like rats. So, almost as a reaction to that, they cut off Aquaman's hand. They turned Green Lantern into a monster. They made Green Arrow into a bad character. These charac-



Another unpublished Batman drawing, straight from Neal's sketchbook.

BRAVE & BOLD #79 · A·S. 22
WITH ONE SWIFT MOTION, THE EX-ARTILLERIST WHIRLS BATMAN'S BODY SCOOPS UP SOME COINS AND...
SPANG!
TANNG!
TINK
CHINK
HERE, CHILL AND THAT'S NOT ALL YOU'RE GETTIN' LOW-HIPE!
HERE'S MY SUNDAY PUNCH! UNPHHH!
YOU WISHED, BIG MAN! NOW I'LL KNOCK YOU INTO NEXT WEEK!
WHAMMP
ARRRRRGHH!
AGGGG!
NEXT ONE IN YOUR SUITE!
GOT TO EXIT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...BUT BATMAN! HOW'LL HE HANDLE THIS CREEP?
BUT WHO'S HAPPS NING? IT'S MARVELLE, AGAIN CH LL... SLASHING ME!
O
O
COURTESY HERITAGE COMICS

A page from Neal's first issue of *Brave and the Bold*, teaming Batman and Deadman, from the original art. (issue #79, Sep 1968). Pencils and inks: Neal Adams.

ters, in my opinion, are DC Comics second tier of characters. So that while Warner was watching out for the two headliners, the second tier of characters got destroyed, and I really like those characters. My philosophy—and if anybody wants to confront me on the street and hear it from my mouth, I'll say it to them—if you want to mess with a character, if you want to change it, and you want to turn it into something else, create your own damn character. Don't mess with the ones that we have. If you're so damned good that you think you have the right to do it, invent your own character, sell a lot of comic books and prove it. Otherwise, leave the Flash alone. Leave Green Lantern and Green Arrow alone. Leave these characters alone. They're good characters.

CBM: Two more, Brian Bolland. Did you see *The Killing Joke*?

Adams: Yes. Excellent, excellent work. It was a very sincere and excellent job. Brian Bolland is terrific.

CBM: And your thoughts on Jim Lee? Have you seen *Hush*?

Adams: Oh, it's terrific. I think anybody who doesn't like what Jim Lee is doing with Batman, because of any little inconsistencies, to me, is making a big mistake, because it's just a fun comic book to read.

CBM: I love it. I haven't looked forward to the *Batman* title coming out so much since you did it.

Adams: Exactly. Me, too.

CBM: Have you seen the *Batman: Animated Series* adaptations of your stories and what do you think of them?

Adams: I see them on and off. You must understand that an awful lot of my career has been spent with companies not paying me royalties for what I do while I fight for other people's rights. I see an awful lot of my stuff. It's almost as though people went into a room and said, "If we change it just this much then it won't be Neal's anymore." I think that's a little odd. What is gained? I saw it happen with the X-Men. The first X-Men movie, pretty much, if you look at it carefully, was

BUT AS THE TANNER HEAVES HIS BULK TO ITS FEET, THE SEA-CAPTAIN HURLS BATMAN IT TOSSED OFF BALANCE AND...
THE SEA CLAWS THE CAPED CRUSADER, BUT AN O'L BOMMER COSTUME HELPS TO KEEP H.M. AFLOAT LONG ENOUGH FOR A SEARCHING BOB N' TOM TO BE REORGANIZED FOR...
SOON, AS THE BATBOPTER HEADS BACK TOWARD GOTHAM CITY...
I MET HIM CLOSE! THAT OL' LINE LED TO A RIVERSIDE WAREHOUSE FIGHT! I WASN'T HARD TO FIGURE WHEN THAT SAP PULLED OUT THAT YOU HAD TO BE ON T
THANKS, CHUM! TOO BAD I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO MAKE USE OF THAT INFO! BUT HE KNOW'N IS THE CLUE BEING IN JACKED YAK'S CAPE-FIT? VETERO AND HIDDEN DIVERSION WIRES!
THAT MIGHTY MOUSE-HAH!
FEARLESS LEADER! I SAY! I COULD BE BLAMED FOR THAT! I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HANDLE CRITTER THAT HAD ATTACKED ZEMIRA ON...I'VE GOT TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS BUT FIRST...LET'S READ HOME SO I CAN CLEAN UP THE MESS IM HAVING, ROBIN!
WHAT A GUY! NEVER MENTIONS TIME EVERY CRIME HE MAKES TIME ZEMIRA HE GIVES TO CHARITY!
COURTESY HERITAGE COMICS

Original art page from *Brave and the Bold* #83 (May 1969), featuring a Batman/Teen Titans team-up. Pencils and inks: Neal Adams.

DEMISE + SOUL OF THE UNIT
OKAY, SARGE, WE'LL EVEN YOU
UH... SIR? OH, COMING DOWN ON A CHUTE!
DOOMP!
LOOK OUT!
THUD
A U.S. ARMY FIELD PIECE? THE INVASION... IT'S BEGUN.
RIGHT, ROCK! AND WE BOTH COMPLETED OUR MISSIONS WITH ONE BLOW!
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE OKAY, FOR A PLAYBOY SPY! YOU SAVED MY SKIN JUST NOW... AND SOME DAY I'LL REPAY YOU
IT TOOK BARELY AN INSTANT FOR ALL THESE MEMORIES TO FLOOD BACK TO ME...AND IN THAT INSTANT FOR STRAPPED-IN GAIL DID NOT WANT THE INFO FROM MY HEART!
YOU STAYED! YOU SURVIVED THE BIRDS! BUT WHY? WHY DID YOU RISK ALL YOU'D GONE THROUGH HERE IN GOTHAM CITY?
I DO NOT KNOW HOW YOU KNOW ME TOMORROW! BUT IN THE MOMENTARY HUSH AND HUSH... I'VE AN ANSWER!
I'VE WANTED UNTIL IT WAS SAFE NOW, I HAVE TIME FOR MY GOLDEN ANGEL! HE WILL LET ME BE A KING IN SOUTH AMERICA, HA! HA!
THE ANGEL... OF COURSE! THE FINAL ONE HOLLOWE'EN! THE MISSION AFTER THE UNKNOWN! BUT THIS ONE'S A LADY SMUGGLED OUT OF FRANCE BY YOU AND UNDERGROUN THAT PAINT! IT'S YOURS SOLD! THE COLD YOU STOLE FROM THE PEOPLE OF CHATEAUROUGE!!
COMIC BOOK ARTISTS #4 © DM 1.2

An original art page from what may be the best of the Haney/Adams stories, "The Angel, The Rock and the Cowl," featuring the team-up of Batman and Sgt. Rock, *Brave and the Bold* #94 (Jul 1969). Pencils and inks: Neal Adams.

culled from my series of X-Men, except for the focus on Wolverine. Of course it's hard to argue that the key element of Magneto building a machine that turns everyone into mutants isn't my creation. A bunch of the Batman stuff was my style. I can't argue with their source. If we replace royalties with the word "homage," then I guess they treated me pretty nice.

CBM: I think so. It would have been nice to see your name credited on those cartoons.

Adams: It's funny about that. I see my name enough. It's enough. (laughs) They're selling $75 books with my name on it.

CBM: That's what I'm about to get to. DC's new Neal Adams' Batman hardcover collection is going to be very much like the Green Lantern/Green Arrow and the Deadman collections, correct?

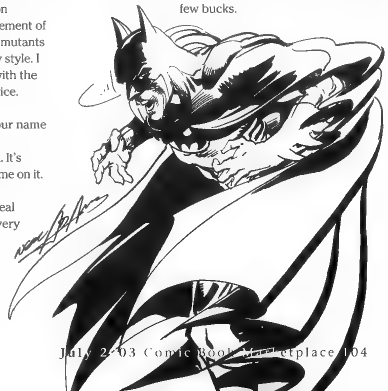
Adams: Not exactly. They don't tell me everything. They try to be kind and courteous, but I had to read in the trades that it's going to sell for $49 instead of $75. I was told all along that it's going to be a $75 book. In fact, I wrote an introduction where I apologized for the cover price, only to find out, a month later, that they changed the cover price. You'd have thought they would have called me since I wrote in the introduction that I was apologizing for this $75 cover price and that it wasn't a $75 cover price anymore. I try to think of it as a good relationship that I had compared to the way it was. I just think, in some ways, maybe they just think I've already received too much attention.

CBM: That seems ridiculous since this book is about you.

Adams: You know, it is beyond me. It almost seems as though, in a way, there's this rolling concept that everybody wants to avoid, and yet it can't be avoided. Like my stuff is reprinted every three to five years at DC and at Marvel. I'm not saying that other people don't deserve to be reprinted, but if you start to look at it, my stuff is reprinted an awful lot. And each time it's reprinted the price goes higher. There was a period of time when they were reprinting my stories with other stories by other people. One or two of my stories with a bunch of other Batman stuff. Well, I know my fans. I understand my fans, would actually buy that book even if they didn't like anything else that was in there, just to get that one story. And it almost seems that somehow at DC Comics the clarity finally came through, that, you know, "Why don't we just be honest about it and say if we reprint Neal's stuff and do it in a halfway decent edition, the chances are that people will buy it?"

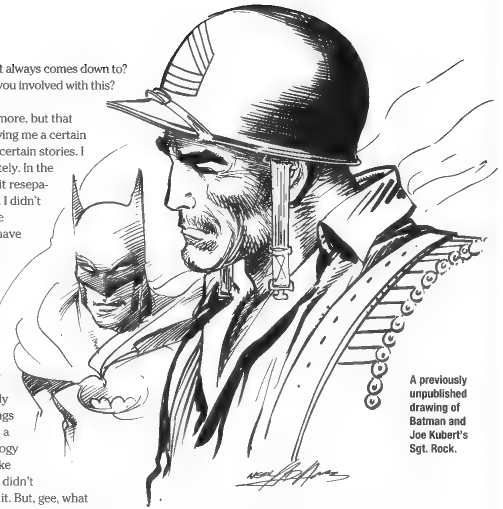
CBM: They've been clamoring for this. It's ridiculous.

Adams: I think it's really nice. So they're trying to be nice about it, probably because it's going to make a few bucks.



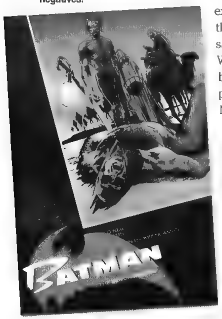
CBM: Unfortunately, isn't that what it always comes down to? So, my next question is, how much are you involved with this?

Adams: Well, I wish I was involved more, but that would be the case anytime. They're giving me a certain grace, letting me—*letting me*—recolor certain stories. I asked to recolor the first book completely. In the end, I recolored half of it. They've had it reseparated and I marked up the separations. I didn't get to see the corrections. I would have thought that, out of courtesy, I would have seen the corrections to make sure that everything happened correctly so that it didn't come through and people see my name on it and think that this is how Neal thinks. It's kind of extending it and then kind of yanking it back as they go. I'm sort of experimenting with the philosophy that, if these books were done with a little bit more care now at slightly more modern times, that there are things that I could do there that I really did as a test that never came through. Technology in those days was the crudest. It was like drawing with crayons on toilet paper. I didn't come from that place, but I adapted to it. But, gee, what if we now did it right?...at least partially?...did the coloring better and found the nuances and did a decent job?...what then would it become? Would it become the same, only better? Would it become slightly different?



A previously unpublished drawing of Batman and Joe Kubert's Sgt. Rock.

In 1989, Great Britain's Titan Press released a series of Batman books featuring all of Neal's Batman art. The books were all in glorious black and white shot from original negatives.



So, for me, everything is an experiment. I would like to think that my fans feel the same way, that, gee, let's see. We want to see the old stuff, but let's see the evolutionary process and see if it works. Me and my fans get that.

CBM: Is Cory the one who did the coloring? You wanted her to do the entire book.

Adams: She and I together—yes.

CBM: Why did they only allow you to do half the book?

Adams: Budget.

CBM: But you're having her go ahead with the rest of the book?

Adams: Well, yes. Because I think it will probably be reprinted again. What's the chance of that? So, when the budget is okay, why not have the good color done to it? We're at a point now, where the prices of these books are like a cartoon. You're talking about $49 and $75 books. It's a joke. They were done originally for 12 cents and 25 cents. It's like walking through somebody else's cartoon. I don't quite get the joke. So, I can't look at all that and pretend that it makes any sense to me. What I have to do is I have to say, "Okay, this is my little universe that I feel my communication is between me and whoever reads it." That tunnel that exists is the most important tunnel. All the rest of it is just bullshit. So, I'm just trying to fix the tunnel. See the books here? See the books that you have here (pointing to the British trade paperbacks collecting Adams work in black and white)? Those books were printed by Titan Press. Titan Press is an English company. All over Europe and all over the world, my stuff has been reprinted in a reasonable quality reprint.

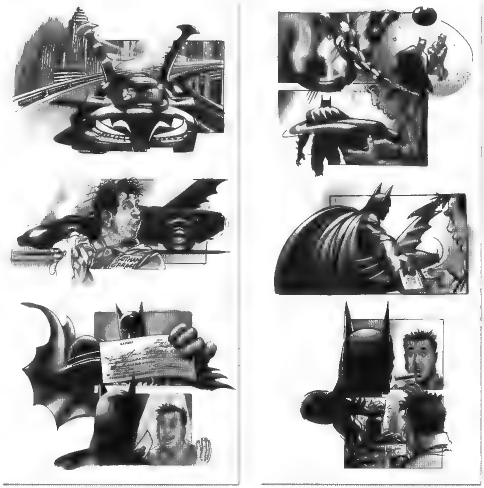
CBM: I love these because your art shines.

Adams: Well, whether it does or not, other people around the world...it's sort of like in your own hometown you're nothing, but you may be something around the world. The rest of the world has been doing this for years. It's finally occurred

to DC that maybe we ought to do it too and we'll make some money. That also is a cartoon, you know? The example that I think of is that, if your strides are too big and you make too much of an impact, people create an impression of what you are. And you can't be whatever you really are. I'm just the guy in the fields doing my work, but, somehow, there's whatever the impression is. So, if your steps become too big, you're a presence, a lion if you'll allow, and you walk out of the room, monkeys come down from the trees and throw nuts at you, because they think you're not going to turn around and look them in the eye and say, "What are you doing?" That's sort of what my relationship with DC is. It's like, I step out of the room and people are throwing nuts at me. I don't get it. And I turn back and everybody's real nice. I would prefer that everybody was nice all the time. I'm always nice to them.

It's another one of those weird cartoon contradictions. DC and Warner want to do all the licensing themselves for all their characters. Now, I am an approved source for doing licensing work. In fact, I did one of their style guides for one of the movies. On the other hand, I'm not quite so warmly embraced that they would recommend me. I don't know why. I have no idea. But what happens is that people in the regular world, let's say you were working at Six Flags and you were going to do a Batman ride, and you had to, say, in a board meeting decide who would be the best guy to storyboard the ride. You might stand up and say, "Neal Adams," a sensible choice since I've been designing rides for 15 years, including the Terminator T2 3D ride, which, of course, is what they did at Six Flags. So, now Six Flags wants to contact Neal Adams to do the storyboard. Well, then, DC Comics says, "Who's Neal Adams?" Then somebody says, "Well, he used to do Batman." "Oh, is that okay? Is he an approved guy?" "Well, yeah, sort of." "Are you sure?" "Uh, yeah, I think so." Then Six Flags says, "Well, we really want to use this guy because he does great boards and he knows the tech. Okay, make a deal." Or somebody wants to do a commercial or somebody wants to do packaging. So what happens is that, for whatever reason, when somebody thinks of Batman, they don't think of Frank Miller, because that's *Dark Knight*. They're going to think of Neal Adams. And so they call me, and now I have to say to them, well you know, you have to get approval from DC because I may not be approved for this job. It's like one of those "Is this a cartoon conversation?" Excuse me. I don't know where to turn. So what we did was, over the years I've done a bunch of things using the Batman character for various clients that DC knows about or they get done as presentation pieces. So we said to DC on this reprint project, "Look, guys, as long as I've done these things, why don't you use them in the books? They're your characters. I have no right to reproduce them and they're available. If I can just get page rate for them, or whatever it is that you're going to pay." Then so, yes, we've offered storyboards. The storyboards for these rides were done in full color, really great. I don't mean to say they're great because I did them. But my studio did them and everyone did a bang up job. So there's a lot that's been presented to DC. How much will they use? Honestly, no one has sent me as much as a memo. I don't know what they're going to use. If it were me, it'd be half of a book, or a third of a book. Some of this stuff is really great. I have fans that go to the website and call me: "I saw that Batman storyboard for American Express. Did that ever get

Neal's storyboards for a proposed American Express commercial featuring Batman.



"I DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR US BOTH TO REALIZE..."
"...WHO—WHATEVER—OH!! WHAT DID HE ESCAPE?"
BUT HOW DID HE ESCAPE? THE AWESOME ELEMENTS OF BENCH VS. CHISELER
"DAWN WAS STREAKING THE NIGHT-SKY WHEN I DROVE HER HOME! WHAT ELSE COULD I, NOT? THERE WERE NO CLUES TO WHERE HE
"WHERE IT—HE DO HOW, BATMAN—WHAT WILL HE DO?"
ONE THING HE WON'T DO—HIS TO WHEN YOU FRANCIE!
"ROBIN! ROBIN—DARLING—IT'S FRANCIE! YOUR FRANCIE—WHATEVER, ALL!"
"B-B-B-S HE COMES OUT OF HIS CAVE, I'LL—I'LL—OH, SO COOL! YES!"
"WHO'S ME, ROBIN? AUNT—HIS NAME—HE'S H-H-H, YOU KNOW! HE'S THE ONE WHO'S BEEN
"YOU THINK I WAS BRINGING FRANCIE—SEVERAL KIDS, AND ME WHEN YOU DROVE AWAY? I'M BATMAN—THAT'S WHEN I STARTED!"
"NO SOONER HAS I ENTERED MY ROOM, WHO-I HEARD MY SCRAPING SOUND, LIKE A CHALK ALONG A BLACKBOARD."
"THERE WAS NO DOUBT..."
"THAT'S WHERE I LEFT IT. UNTIL I COULD DREAM UP ANOTHER WAY TO TRACK HIM DOWN! WHAT HAD HAPPENED AFTER I LEFT..."
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COURTESY HERO TALK COMICS

From the original art, Batman consoles Francie Lee, the soon-to-be bride of Kirk Langstrom (Manbat). *Detective Comics* #407 (Jan 1971), pencils: Neal Adams and inks: Dick Giordano.

done?" "No, it never did." "Oh, wow, that would have been great." You're right. It would have been great.

By the way, it may sound like I'm complaining. I'm not really complaining. I just find it to be so darn weird.

CBM: I mean, here they are, they're making three books, $50 a book, and, yet, the communication between you and the company that's producing it is practically nonexistent.

Adams: They're doing their best at this point, and I have to give credit to a couple of people that are trying. Bob Greenberger is really making an effort to make this thing work. I just think it's the machine—whatever the machine is. It's sort of like communism. I'm its enemy. It's the cult of the individual. You don't want to have too much of the cult of the individual there.

CBM: Since we were talking about Cory doing the recoloring and it being separated, I'd like to get your take on modern comic book coloring, on the Macintosh, in Photoshop specifically. What do you think about that? Because you kind of revolutionized coloring comics when you were doing it, but you didn't have the ability to get on a computer and get so personal with it.

Adams: Well, I have to compliment all the guys that are doing a good job. But, of course, I have to criticize all the guys who are not doing quite as good a job, and recommend, to a certain extent, that it's important to know more about color first and then to know about the computer. I think it's important to learn about color. There are a lot of people who don't understand the difference between CMYK and RGB. People think that you can color by picking colors off a palette and not understand the constituents of the color, and then convert it to CMYK, which is red, yellow, blue and black. RGB are video colors, and there's nothing you can do once you work in RGB to clean a color because no RGB color has all four colors in it. The color can't be clean.

I wouldn't argue this from a point of view of taste or giving my advice or anything else. The argument that I would make is there's simply no way to use RGB for the artists to get, for the colorist to get, what he wants, because the technology is impossible. So you can defend it, well, as in I prefer to work this way, but the truth is you can't ever get the colors you want to get, so even the staunchest defender fails in the technology. In my opinion, if we want to be good at what we do, we should decide to get not what the machine decides to give you. But what you want if you fail on that basis, and you can live with it, fine. If you fail and then point to the technology and say, "Yeah, but the technology let me down," that's weak. I don't do that. I don't think that's a good idea. I'm not using myself as an example, I just don't think it's a good standard to go by—technology let me down. One of the things I say to artists is, when you show me your portfolio, don't stand by and make excuses for it. The portfolio is supposed to live on its own. You can't run around to your clients or whomever, and tell them why this doesn't work. Computers, yes, are great. And what they've done is they've allowed for many more mistakes and much more dull looking comic books. And they've allowed the colorists to have excuses for doing the job wrong. I don't think that's healthy. Whether it's good or not, I don't care. I just don't think it's healthy mentally.

CBM: You were a maverick and a trailblazer…
Adams: Me? Not anymore.

CBM: In your day, you were. In comics. Do you think anybody fits that mold today? Can someone be like that within a large company?

Adams: I think it's sort of like, to use your wording, if the trail has been blazed, there are other jobs to move on to. Once you get the wagon train to California, that trail is done. So now you have to build the cities and you have to do other things. So

it's no longer trail blazing, it's something else. It's changing, evolving, whatever the descriptive word is. And the trail blazing that I did was simply to take the comic books, or try to take the comic books, out of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century where we actually live. To me, it was more a matter of prying the tops off bottles. The bottles already existed with the tops on, you just had to have someone open the bottles. The problem was that the comic book industry was not opening the bottles. So, it's important to have done that, but, as an artist and as a thinker, it's insignificant, because all it is is the other part of your personality not sitting still for stupidity. That not sitting still for stupidity, on its own, is *not* worthy, it's simply what you have to do. But people say nice things about me for doing easy, obvious things. Like, they say I changed comics by bringing new technologies. But all those technologies existed out there in the world already. The blinders were on. So, what I did was I found ways to introduce them by fooling the people who were there into thinking that they discovered it or that I wasn't doing anything that would endanger their jobs. I had to find these different ways. Like, DC Comics had 32 colors that they could use. Marvel was using 64 colors. Why was Marvel using 64 colors and DC was using 32 colors? Because somebody established a rule that DC could only use solid yellow in its colors for blank reason. They used 100% blue, 50% blue, 25% blue; 100% red, 50% red, 25% red; 100% yellow, period. No 50%, no 25%. So, if you look at a DC comic books from those days, and you look at the skin tone, it's pink. Pink: 25% red, no yellow. If you think about that, if you say it out loud or write it on the blackboard, you'll think it's insane. Yet, they did it. Now, when I asked about it, they said it's cheaper. Because those ladies in Connecticut who did the color separations, they'd get to pay them less without those two colors. I found it hard to believe that anybody would actually say that to me, but, of course, I was "just an artist." So I had to get the publisher to ask that same question. But I couldn't just ask the publisher. So I went through a friend who could ask the publisher, an editor, who then asked the publisher. The publisher went to the production manager and said, "Why the hell is Marvel

Francie unmasked! Original art panel from "Marriage: Impossible" *Detective Comics* #407 (Jan 1971). Pencils: Neal Adams and inks: Dick Giordano.

getting more colors than we are? I heard that they're getting 64 colors and they're getting this tone yellow, whatever the hell that is, how come?" Production manager got on the phone to the color separator and said, "How much more will it cost us to get tone yellow?" Thereby setting the color separator up to be on his weird side. But, unfortunately for the production manager, who was Sol Harrison, the color separator who separated DC comics also separated Marvel's comics, and he couldn't possibly change the price. All he could say was "Oh, you want tone yellow? You've got it." That took about 14 seconds. In 14 seconds, DC Comics doubled the number of colors they could use by one guy asking a question on the phone. Does this sound insane? But the manipulation I had to continue to get the boss, the leader, Jack Leibowitz, to ask Sol Harrison that question, that was the game.

CBM: You had to play the game.
Adams: I had to play the game. No choice.

CBM: Other than inking yourself, Dick Giordano, for the most part, did your Batman books. Would you have preferred somebody else to ink?

Adams: I would have preferred to ink them all. I was convinced by DC and told by DC that that's the way they work and that's much more efficient and I'll make more money doing that. I didn't find it to be true, but since I had a relationship with Dick and I liked the relationship and since they had put a lot more burdens on me doing so many covers and doing stuff that it seems to me that although I wouldn't necessarily make more money, I could make a better contribution and so I let it happen. I think Dick learned some things along the way, and I think I learned some things about being a little bit more flexible with my artwork.

CBM: The two of you started Continuity together. Correct?

Adams: No, I opened the studio. Dick came in. We decided to become partners after he came in. As it was a small studio, Dick thought he might come in. When he came in, we decided to have a name. So, in fact, we did start the company Continuity together. So my answer was wrong, we did start it together.

CBM: Okay, how did he come out of the mix? Why did he leave Continuity?

Adams: Why did he leave Continuity? Nobody leaves Continuity.

CBM: [laughs]
Adams: That's right.

CBM: How did it come about that Giordano was not involved anymore?

Adams: I think he just thought I was a pain in the ass. Not that he didn't think I was a pain in the ass, but it really wasn't his thing to begin with. It wasn't the be-all and end-all of things. Dick's habits didn't really change. He got up at like 5:00 in the morning and started inking, then he came into the studio and inked. I more or less brought in the work, and he'd work on some interesting projects, but it really just wasn't his thing. Dick is a much more laid back guy. Much of the work I've done was at night and he couldn't be part of that. To me, it seemed to be a transitional thing for him. Almost immediately, or very soon after, he left DC offered him the job of art director of DC Comics. I think with the new administration up there, that they realized his value and certainly it was a better step for him, and certainly better for comics. I didn't think of it as him leaving. I thought it was an evolutionary process. Continuity wasn't exactly Dick.

CBM: You always went into National. You worked in their studio a lot.

Adams: Before Continuity, yes I was at National before they kicked me out. They didn't exactly kick me out. They just invited me to leave. I think you'd have to say that somebody like me is not a good person to have unleashed. You either make them the president of the company or you get rid of them. I had way too much influence on artists—everybody listened to me, you know. It was fine when they were floundering, and when nobody could find new artists to bring in, and their editorial policy was a mess. But once that had all settled down, and once they felt they were on equal footing with Marvel, which DC has never been, really, they felt fine. I think letting Dick go the first time was part of the same process. Oh, we can do it on our own now. Everything's fine. Let's get rid of this asshole. Or make him publisher. And I, of course, never had an interest in being a publisher. So, we went through the process, we got to the end of the process. I was doing stuff for Marvel and DC at that time. That wasn't a good ride. It might have been for everyone else, but it wasn't for them. They were saying, "Maybe you want to open your own studio somewhere." I took that as a hint. Also, part of it was, why wasn't I smart enough to figure that out before they did? You know? I really should have figured it out. I really should have said, "Hey, enough of me being here and being a pain in the ass, you know. I really should open my own studio."

CBM: You were doing a lot of good where you were.

Adams: That's true, but there's a time and a tide of things. You miss it till you're neck deep. I missed it by a day.

COMING NEXT:
Neal discusses the individual issues he drew, from *Brave and the Bold* to *Batman*.

by Mike Wilbur

Shadow of the Bat

Few comic book characters have been as pervasive in the toy and collectibles market over the last few decades as the legendary **Batman** and his extended family. But, while licenses to produce Batman toys, novelties and other low-end collectibles seem rather ubiquitous, DC Comics has scrupulously preserved the high-end market of bat-collectibles for itself.

The original 1991 Batman cold-cast resin statue, a collaborative effort between **DC Comics**, **Graphitti Designs** and sculptor **Randy Bowen**, put high-end collectible character statues on the map and set the standard for those that followed.

In addition to the original release, Bowen also produced an extremely limited bronze version of the piece. **DC Direct** released a mini-statue version in 1994. And, as a caution to the unwary collector, a full-size knock-off of the original was offered through the **Warner Brothers Studio Store** chain in the mid-'90s. The WB version features a less-detailed base than the Bowen original, but the piece is still uncomfortably similar enough to fool the unwary.

In the 12 years since the original Batman statue hit the market, many large statues, medium statues, mini-statues and busts of the **Dark Knight** and his partners in anti-crime have emerged from the stately halls of DC Direct. In addition to regular DCU versions of the characters, there are also renditions of various animated incarnations (which will be glossed over here in favor of an in-depth look in a future column).

The Man himself has appeared solo in four different statues and a mini-bust:

- The **Classic Batman** mini-bust, featuring the Golden-Age caped crusader.
- The original statue release, depicting **Batman** crouching on a stone gargoyle, sculpted by Bowen from designs by **Kelley Jones** (also released as a mini-statue a few years later).
- **Batman** atop a clock tower, sculpted by **William Paquet** in 1999, from designs by **Simon Bisley** (also released in mini-statue form in 2001).
- **Vampire Batman**, from the Elseworlds graphic novel *Red Rain*, wherein Batman meets Dracula.
- The latest piece, due in September '03, is based on artist **Jim Lee**'s interpretation of the character during his run as series penciler for *Batman* #s 608 through 619.

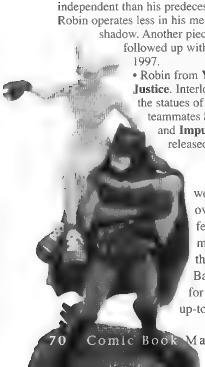
Batman has also appeared in tandem with other characters in some statues:

- **The Dark Knight Returns**, based on writer-artist **Frank Miller**'s speculative-future limited series depicts an aging Batman and a young female Robin. Released in 1996 for the 10th Anniversary of Miller's influential series. Also released in 1999 as a mini-statue.
- **The Dark Knight Strikes Back**, released in conjunction with Miller's long-awaited sequel in 2002, featuring Catgirl (formerly Robin) perched on Batman's shoulder.

***Detective Comics* #38** (covered in *CBM* #101), with Batman and Robin in a re-creation of the classic comic book cover.

Then, of course, there's the ever-present Boy Wonder himself. Robin, in his various guises and incarnations, has been the solo subject of several pieces:

- **The Classic Robin** mini-bust gives us the archetypal sidekick from his Golden-Age glory days.
- **Nightwing**, the now-adult Dick Grayson, has gone solo, with his own identity and base of operations (and his own 1998 statue). Released in a mini-statue version in 2001.
- Bowen's 1994 Robin introduces current Bat-partner **Tim Drake**. More independent than his predecessor, this Robin operates less in his mentor's shadow. Another piece followed up with a mini in 1997.
- Robin from **Young Justice**. Interlocks with the statues of his YJ teammates **Superboy** and **Impulse**, all released in 2000.



Of course, we can't overlook the female members of the team, Batgirl (yes, for those not up-to-date, that's plural on members):

- The Silver Age **Batgirl** mini-bust depicts Barbara Gordon, the second Batgirl, from her early mid-'60s appearances.
- The Batgirl statue from 1998 shows the latter-day exploits of **Barbara Gordon**, prior to her crippling at the hands of the Joker.
- The newest **Batgirl**, who first appeared in 1999 during the year-long "No Man's Land" crossover that spanned all the Batman family titles, made her statue debut in July '03.

And then, there are the villains:

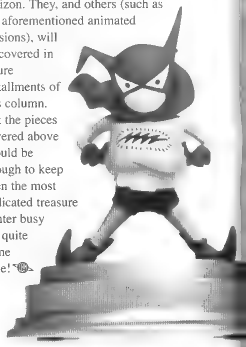
- While not a villain in the truest sense, extra-dimensional imp **Bat-Mite** was more often a hindrance than a help to the 1950s era Dynamic Duo.
- Another sometimes-villain, sometimes-not, **Catwoman**, as envisioned by her long-time series illustrator **Jim Balent**, prowls the rooftops in a 1997 piece sculpted by Paquet.
- The **Classic Joker** mini-bust gives us the more mischievous, less homicidal side of the Golden-Age villain.
- 1995's **Joker**, as sculpted by Paquet and designed by **Graham Nolan**, merges elements of **Jerry Robinson**'s original illustrations with a touch of Jack Nicholson's 1989 big-screen portrayal. Another piece issued in mini-statue form in 1998.
- The **Joker** marionette, first release in what DC describes as "...a new high-end line of strictly limited collectibles, the DC Direct Gallery..." hit the scene in June '03. Based on the Golden-Age incarnation of the Clown Prince of Crime.
- The **Coin of Two-Face** prop presented the infamous accessory of Batman's schizophrenic nemesis.

No hero would be complete without his tools-of-the-trade:

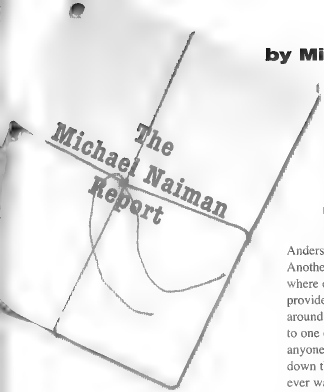
- The **Batarang**, first released in DC Direct's line of character props was originally produced "life-size," and followed a couple of years later by a mini version.

- The **Bat Signal**, for obvious practical reasons, could not be produced "life-size," but was a well detailed replica nonetheless.
- The **Batmobile** of the '50s replica and Batmobile of the '60s replica both featured working lights, and came packaged with a "title" document and a blueprint of the "real" car.

More Batman items are on the horizon. They, and others (such as the aforementioned animated versions), will be covered in future installments of this column. But the pieces covered above should be enough to keep even the most dedicated treasure hunter busy for quite some time! CBM



by Michael Naiman



Data, Data, Data (It's Our Heritage)

This column is being written on the eve of the San Diego show and will see print after the show is over. Hmmm. Then two months down the line, I can tell you about what happened at the show. Confused? Well, that's just the nature of the printed monthly magazine—not always Timely.

• • •

And speaking of Timely, still strong with a large segment of the well-heeled collecting community. Recent issues sold: *Human Torch* #8 FR $82, #10 VG $457, #14 FN $275 and #18 GD $217; *Captain America* #2 App. VG/FN $2475, #8 App. VG $485, #28 VG+ $495, #33 VG/FN $535, #54 VG $180, #55 GD $200, #66 FN $415 and #78 VG $315; *Marvel Mystery* #9 GD $3400, #13 VG $630, #14 App. VG $600, #15 VF- $1425, #16 GD $270, #19 VF- $1400, #22 VF $1480, #26 VF $1300, #27 VF $1305, #28 VF+ $1408, #29 VF $1622, #30 VF+ $1690, #31 VG $320, #32 FN/VF $465, #33 VG/FN $560, #34 FN/VF $1225, #35 VF- $1200, #41 VF/NM $2045 and #46 VF+ $2855.

• • •

David Armstrong, President of the American Association of Comicbook Collectors, has outdone himself again! This year's (11th Annual) Dinner Showcases (forgive me!) the DC Silver Age and honors Julie Schwartz, Murphy Anderson and Carmine Infantino. Another spectacular art exhibit (seen no where else than at this show) has been provided by the top collectors from around the country. If you've never been to one of these, do it next year! Ask anyone around who has attended. Hands down the most spectacular AACC event ever was the EC Reunion in 2000!

• • •

Heritage's multi-day auction at San Diego was a solid success. On Tuesday July 15th, a couple of days before the opening of the SD event, they began their Signature Auction. Witnessing the auction brought to mind how very different the auction climate has become since the rocking early days of Sotheby's. The Heritage comic book auction on Tuesday brought together about a dozen participants—half of those present were employees taking phone calls. There was a very strong contingent of Internet bidders. No longer is it necessary to actually be at the auction. It completely dilutes any excitement in the bidding process, however; not everyone can take time off to travel to SD. Bid from the comfort of your home—just as long as the check clears, no one really cares if you are there or not!

Some of the sales from Tuesday's auction (all of these books are slabbed and the sales amounts include the 15% commission): *Action* #214 VF+ $310, #300 NM $1063, #301 NM $425, #308 NM $425, #311 NM $414, #325 NM 259, #327 NM $247, #330 NM $345, #333 NM $299, #334 NM (Pacific Coast) $299, #335 NM $345, #339 NM $431, #340 NM $294, #343 NM+ $517, #344 NM+ $575, #346 NM+ $552, #349 NM+ $546, #369 NM+ $517; *Adventure* #256 FN+ $172, #340 NM+ $488, #346 NM $402, #357 NM $287; *All Star Western* #10 NM $1092; *Aquaman* #3 NM $977, #24 NM+ $288, #25 NM $276, #32 NM $126, #35 NM+ $230, #37 NM $175, #38 NM $149, #46 NM $74; *Atom* #1 VF+ (Winnipeg) $747, #2 VF+ (Mass) $287, #6 VF $69, #7 NM- $356, #24 NM $123, #30 NM $310; *Baby Huey and Papa* #1 NM $575; *Batman Annual* #1 VF $431; *Batman* #100 VF $1380, #108 VF+ $368, #120 NM- $575, #147 NM $546; *Black Magic* #1 NM/MT $89; *Brave and Bold* #50 NM (Pacific Coast) $1495, #55 NM (Pacific Coast) $322, #56 NM+ $747, #57 NM $948, #65 NM $218, #67 NM $460, #68 NM $1610. #69 NM+ $632; *Bullwinkle* #1 VF/NM $178; *Challengers of the Unknown* #1 App. VG- $126, #2 FN $207, #4 VF+ $350; *Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love* #1 NM $776; *Dell Giant* (Sleeping Beauty) NM+ $1610; *Deputy Dawg* #1 NM $235; *Doom Patrol* #102 NM $115, #106 NM $126, #109 NM $115, #110 NM+ $224, #112 NM+ $184, #113 NM $172; *Fighting American* #1 NM $120; *Flash* #105 FN $1552; *Friendly Ghost Casper* #1 VF- $287; *Green Lantern* #1 VF+ (Winnipeg) $2760, #1 VF $1610, #65 NM $402; *Harvey Hits* #1 VF $276, #3 NM $4370; *Hawkman* #4 NM+ (Western Penn) $1035, #17 NM+ $345; *Hot Stuff* #1 VF/NM $2070; *Hot Stuff Sizzlers* #1 NM- $253; *House of Mystery* #103 NM (White Mtn) $517, #143 NM $1265; *House of Secrets* #92 NM+ $4140; *Justice League of America* #1 VF- $1667, #1 VG $460, #4 NM- $1725, #22 VF+ $276; *Little Lotta in Foodland* #1 NM $414; *Metal Men* #1 VF $437; *Mister Miracle* #1 NM+ (Double cover) $546; *Mystery in Space* #53 FN- (White Mtn) $632; *Our Army at War* #81 VF+

[continued on page 77]

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Ace Comics
#9 FN $370 2.57X

Action
#71 FN $187 80%
#228 FN $100 90%
#235 FN $110 99%
#283 FN $20 56%
#350 VF $20 77%
#361 VF $20 87%

Adventure
#253 VF $80 45%
#266 VF $62 43%
#267 VF- $128 24%
#271 FN $44 44%
#293 VF $80 72%
#321 VF/NM $49 71%

Adventures into Weird Worlds
#7 FN- $50 62%
#8 FN $44 54%
#9 VG $34 63%
#10 VG $39 72%

Amazing Mysteries
#33 VG $69 88%

Amazing Spider-Man
#9 VG $184 95%
#16 VF- $114 30%
#26 VF $195 76%
#39 VF $205 98%
#45 VF $50 52%
#121 VF $115 98%
#129 VF $222 1.53X

Astonishing
#14 GD $62 2.06X

Batman
#10 FN $810 80%
#25 FN $405 61%
#142 VF $50 42%
#146 VF $40 48%
#218 VF $35 88%
#234 VF/NM $115 85%
#238 VF/NM $95 93%

Blackhawk
#50 GD $45 1.47X

Bobby Benson B-Bar-B Riders
#10 FN $19 47%
#15 VG+ $24 60%

Captain America
#40 VF- $1580 1.3X
#78 FN $400 1.33X

Captain Science
#3 VG $66 93%

Combat (Atlas)
#2 VG $41 1.57X

Crimes by Women
#15 VF $250 68%

Dark Mysteries
#1 GD $42 39%

Daredevil
#1 FN $610 1.11X

Defenders
#4 VF $9 39%
#11 NM- $19 54%

Famous Funnies
#22 GD $200 3.33X
#23 FN- $307 1.8X
#41 FN $88 1.01X

Fantastic Four
#1 VG $2,855 1.7X
#26 VF- $170 55%
#48 VF- $235 34%
#49 VF $147 70%
#49 VF- $115 55%
#52 VF/NM $120 77%
#112 VF $71 1.04X

Forbidden Worlds
#1 GD $94 62%

Frontline Combat
#7 GD $29 1.7X

Ghost Rider (ME)
#11 FN $40 61%

Haunt of Fear
#9 GD $70 1.75X

Hulk
#107 VF/NM $20 28%
#111 VF $19 54%

Iron Man & Sub-Mariner
#1 VF/NM $112 78%

Journey into Mystery
#16 VG $67 80%
#78 VF/NM $260 1.04X
#88 VF/NM $235 68%
#112 VF/NM $230 92%

King Comics
#6 FN $355 1.33X

Marge's Little Lulu
#26 FN $38 84%

Marvel Feature
#11 VF/NM $52 1.16X

Marvel Tales (Atlas)
#108 VG $63 79%

Menace
#8 VG $27 45%

Modern
#72 VG $61 90%
#92 VG- $61 98%

Mysterious Adventures
#6 FN $87 94%
#9 VG $32 44%
#18 VG $58 73%

Mystery Tales
#19 FN $45 50%

National Comics
#6 VF $595 75%

Out of the Shadows
#8 VG $149 1.49X
#12 FN $43 36%

Prize Western
#72 GD $10 73%
#74 VG+ $17 65%
#87 FN- $27 64%
#93 VG+ $17 57%
#94 VG $23 80%

Shock SuspenStories
#3 GD $57 1.9X

Silver Surfer
#1 FN $135 1.07X
#3 NM- $102 49%
#4 VF/NM $182 42%

Space Western
#44 GD $72 1.67X

Space Squadron
#4 FN- $57 41%

Spellbound
#6 VG- $32 47%
#6 VG $34 50%
#7 FN $45 52%

Spy Hunters
#5 FN $15 36%

Modern
#72 VG $61 90%
#92 VG- $61 98%

Strange Planets
#12 VF/NM $27 31%

Strange Tales
#101 VF- $320 46%
#106 VF+ $142 1.02X
#110 FN $311 1.01X
#111 VF $202 84%
#114 FN+ $97 95%

Strange Tales Annual
#2 VF- $306 59%

Sub-Mariner (SA)
#1 VF $96 77%
#1 VG $27 79%

Super Comics
#11 FN $103 73%

Superboy
#2 VG+ $400 1.02X
#53 FN $43 72%

Superman
#76 VF/NM $2175 1.45X
#127 FN $25 28%
#140 VF- $86 61%
#149 FN- $28 44%
#152 FN $21 70%
#193 VF $26 49%

T-Man
#32 VF $29 48%
#35 VF- $20 33%
#37 FN $25 76%

Tales of Terror Annual
#3 VG $140 43%

Teenage Dope Slaves
#1 VG+ $255 1.23X

Tales of Suspense
#48 VF $195 87%
#50 VF/NM $210 1.2X
#57 FN $47 82%
#63 VF $91 56%
#66 VF/NM $93 63%

Tales to Astonish
#6 VG $42 58%
#11 VG $81 1.5X
#46 FN $28 58%
#63 NM- $52 58%

Two-Fisted Tales
#25 VG $29 58%

Underworld (DS Pub.)
#2 VG $48 60%

Vacation Parade
#1 VG $78 57%
#1 FN $130 58%

Venus
#10 FN $182 83%

War Fury
#1 FN $113 1.57X

Web of Evil
#1 VG $61 55%
#5 FN $212 1.54X

Weird Fantasy (EC)
#8 FN $67 57%

Weird Science-Fantasy Annual
#1 VG+ $158 38%

Wonder Woman
#121 FN $37 95%
#122 FN $46 1.18X
#130 FN+ $30 1.25X
#144 VG $10 83%
#165 VF- $15 39%

X-Men
#4 FN $202 1.22X
#6 VF $182 76%
#8 VF- $128 53%
#9 FN $75 78%
#10 VF $168 66%
#11 VF $125 60%
#12 VF $122 46%
#13 VF $105 50%
#14 VF $204 91%

Vincent Zurzolo, Jr.
Metropolis Collectibles

I am not sure where you live in the United States or around the World, but June in New York City was very, very wet. In fact I believe it was one of the wettest Junes in our history. The comic book market by contrast has been anything but wet and soggy. Comics are hot, hot, hot!

Possibly the strongest part of the market is Silver and Bronze Age Marvels. I am selling high-, mid- and low-grade Marvels at an alarmingly frenetic pace. From keys to commons I haven't seen anything like this upsurge in sales of Marvels in quite some time. Keep in mind I am not saying that Marvels were slow and are just picking up. What I am saying is Marvels were strong and are now stronger.

I have sold the following in the month of June: *Amazing Fantasy* #15 CGC 7.0 for $8000, a GD for $1200; *Amazing Spider-Man* #7 G/VG $121, #13 CGC 9.4 $5,750, #23 F/VF $210, #29 G/VG $27, #34 FN $60, #85 NM- $80; *Avengers* #1 G/VG $328, #50 F/VF $12; *Captain America* #100 G/VG $48, #100 FN $100, #105 VF/NM $43; *The Cat* #1 VF $17; *Conan* #20 VF/NM $33; *Creatures on the Loose* #17 VF/NM $14; *Daredevil* #1 VG+ $300; *Fantastic Four* #48 GD $73, #48 CGC 9.4 $1800, #66 NM- $145; *Iron Man* #1 VG+ $73; *Iron Fist* #14 VG+ $25; *Journey into Mystery* #83 FN- $975; *Marvel Feature* #11 FN $10; *Outlaw Kid* #2 VF $9; *Strange Tales* #146 VF $24; *Sub-Mariner* #1 FN $43; *Tales to Astonish* #50 FN $30, #92 VF/NM $60; *Thor* #126 VF $107, #169 NM $90, #202 VF+ $8; *What If* #1 VF/NM $17; *X-Men* #1 GD $550, #26 VF $88, #149 NM/MT $15; *X-Men Giant Size* #1 F/VF $340.

I recently walked the floor of the Philadelphia Wizard World Convention. Though extremely well promoted and run this show was slow for most of the dealers I spoke to and I did not have a lot of luck finding material I needed for customers. This was very odd, as I had heard last year's show was great. I was actually thinking about setting up at this show but am glad I did not after seeing many dealers shaking their heads in dismay.

At the end of the month I set up at the Madison Square Garden Sci-Fi & Fantasy Convention. This show was also very well promoted and run. This show differed from the Philly show in that there were a lot of buyers in the room. Sales for the show were up from last year. After last year's show I realized I needed to have a greater number of less expensive books for the show. I started the show with about seven boxes of Silver and Bronze Age Marvels and finished with about five and half.

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We are enjoying the business generated by the current flock of comic book movies. Mostly adults returning to comic book stores after giving up interest in comics years before. Curiosity brings them in and the art/story quality in the recent comics keeps them coming back. Back issues are selling better with this influx of return/new business. In fact, we are selling more back issues than are being sold back to us.

Homegrown, one-time dealers are speculating that they don't need the comic book store middleman to wholesale their comics when they can retail them on their own. Unfortunately for them, the dynamics of selling comics for more than bargain prices can be daunting without a store or well-developed roots on-line firmly established. We actually see comic deals that are stalled out because the owners won't sell to us and can't figure out how to make big dollars on their own. They try through the usual methods without the valuable experience that comes from grading comics for years. Even returns and unhappy customers teach dealers how to cope and sell within the hobby. Those experiences come to the novice sellers who are not prepared for the negatives in business. Soured, the owners keep their comic books in storage limbo. Occasionally, we see these comic owners return to us and a fair deal is struck. Others ask about and are sometimes granted consignment space at our store or through us to eBay.

For the owner of a comic

book collection that is not unique or does not contain enough of the "right" comics we say this: If you are in need of quick cash and you think your comics are the answer—they are probably not; if you are looking to make extra money and selling comics from home for big bucks is your answer—probably not. The hours consumed in that endeavor could have been better spent in a career move supplemented by comics as a fun hobby.

A lucky few are continuing to see profit from compound sales of CGC-graded comics. The numbers online look tremendous. But, are all those sales making real profit? CGC is not cheap. Submission costs plus two-way shipping add up. Figure in the cost of the comic before slabbing and how much real money are the sellers truly making. Based upon the CGC-related activity at our store I think a lucky few are seeing dollar signs worth the effort. The rest appear to be just enjoying the game without making enough serious coin to justify their efforts. We are infrequently offered CGC comics by owners looking to wholesale. This deal is rarely sealed because the owner sank too much cash into the original purchase/CGC encapsulation. Not everybody wants a 9.8 Dynamic Forces/CGC Signature Series *Sojourn* #1 for ten times *Guide*! We can't make the purchase without the owner taking a loss or making so little profit it just isn't worth it.

Golden Age: *Beware* #11 F/VF $170; *Chamber Of Chills* #23 VG/F $70; *Mysterious Adventures* #7 VG $90; *Tales From the Crypt* #45 FN $95; *Weird Mysteries* #12 G/VG $65; *Weird Science* #15 VG $58.

Silver Age: *Avengers* #1 FN- $642, #2 F/VF $295, #3 F/VF $300, #4 CGC 6.5 $475; *Creepy* #1 FN $30; *Fantastic Four* #48 F/VF $448, #112 VF $60; *Silver Surfer* #1 CGC 8.5 $450; *Strange Tales* #107 FN+ $86, #110 CGC 7.5 $800, #115 VF $325; *Tales To Astonish* #100 VF $40, #101 VF $35; *X-Men* #15 FN+ $100.

Bronze/Modern: *Amazing Spider-Man* #300 NM $85; *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 FN $207; *Uncanny X-Men* #94 VF-$425, #101 VF $60, #102 NM $65.

John Paul

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Sales and attendance are as solid as ever at our shows here in Northern NJ. Even though our June Wayne show was up against a large three-day Madison Square Garden event, we had no drop-off in numbers! Many of our customers commented that they went to day one or two of that show, but came to ours on Sunday to buy! Once again, I cannot stress how important it is to maintain a friendly environment. Customers want and deserve respect when they are buying anything. We live in a consumer society, we're *all* customers ourselves somewhere on a daily basis, and we have *all* stopped shopping somewhere because of someone's bad attitude or a disappointing purchase. *So many* comic dealers I have met over the past 30 years just do not seem to understand this basic concept. Anyway—

The flood of Marvel movies this year has definitely produced a solid increase in back issue sales. Silver and Bronze *DD*, *Hulk* and *X-Men* sell very well. But, realistically, most 1990s issues up until the reboots sell for $1 or $2. (Except for *Inc Hulk*! *Guide* seems to be the typical selling price for common issues regardless of era). Actually, almost all publishers' comics from the Bronze Age and earlier are selling well in high-grade (VF or better). Marvel and DC sell well in lower grades with slight discounts. Collectors of Gold Key, Dell, Charlton, Archie, Harvey, etc., seem to be focusing on higher grades. While they are a much smaller group of collectors, the number of high-grade copies of these "second-tier" companies that are available is only a small fraction of the big two. I would expect them to eventually adjust their collecting habits when they realize how scarce true high-grade copies are.

Two titles that are almost impossible for our dealers to keep in stock are *Amazing World of DC Comics* and *FOOM*. These prozines had *much* smaller print runs than other publishers' comics had from the same era. Prices for them are all over the ball field. Common issues in lower grade start at $5, but scarcer issues in higher grade can bring $50 to $100! One of our dealers discovered an incredible "hidden gem" in *FOOM* #2 (I'll be honest, I can't keep up with all of the fan press out there, but this is the first I've seen of it). The early issues of *FOOM* featured a contest asking readers to send in ideas for new characters along with sketches. Most suggestions were very typical and amateurish (even Steve Rude and Rich Larson's!). This issue featured a character named—*Wolverine*! This Wolverine is a cyborg (part man, part machine, for the three of you that don't know), which is not all that far removed from a metal-clad skeleton. Visually, there are strong similarities between this character's mask and the early incarnation of the Wolvie we "know and love." The submission was made by an "Andy Olsen." This issue of *FOOM* was dated Summer 1973. *Incredible Hulk* #180 was dated October, 1974. Even allowing for the practice of "post-dating" comics at the time, there is still a solid year between the two. Now, of course the fine print regarding submissions states that they all become the property of Marvel Comics Group. But—how old was Mr. Olsen when he made his submission? Was he of legal age? I would doubt it. In most instances, a minor cannot enter into a legally binding contract. If such is the case, he could potentially be able to litigate for a very substantial sum. And we all thought that "only" Siegel and Shuster were taken advantage of. Now on to some sales highlights:

Platinum Age: *Bringing Up Father* #3 FR $18, #6 GD $36; *Tarzan* book (Grosset & Dunlap) 1st print VG $225.

Gold and Atom Age: *Batman* #65 VG/FN $170, #78 VG- $100, #81 FN

$175; *Captain Marvel* #52 VF- $100; *Congo Bill* #1 VG $250; *Detective* #212 VG+ $85; *Eh!* #1 VG $80; *Flash Comics* #92 VG $500; *MAD* #18 GD $30, #24 VG $200; *National Comics* #3 FN $475; *Our Army At War* #10 FN+ $125; *Picture Stories From the Bible* #1 VF $150; *Rawhide Kid* #2 VG $90; *Shadow* Vol. 2 #10 VG/FN $125; *Superboy* #4 VG- $135; *Wonder Woman* #32 FN $190.

Silver Age: *Action* #252 GD $125; *Amazing Spider-Man* #5 VG+ $300, #20 FN $90, #50 FN+ $150; *Avengers* #3 VG $70, #70 VF $40; *Daredevil* #1 VG/FN $350; *The Heap* #1 NM $35; *Showcase* #7 G/VG $160; *Tales To Astonish* #27 GD+ $250, #57 GD $15; *Wonder Woman* #177 VF $40; *X-Men* #52 VF+ $65.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #121 VG $40, 122 VG/FN $40, #129 FN #75; *Famous First Edition C-30* (*Sensation* #1 Hardbound) VF/NM $200; *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 VG/FN (CGC 5.0) $225; *Incredible Hulk* #143 VF/NM $15, #145 NM $35, #200 VF/NM $20; *Mystery Comics Digest* #1 VF/NM $30, #26 VF $20; *Superman* #233 NM $100.

Ted Van Liew

Superworld
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Well, as usual, anything in NM sells pretty quickly. There are a lot of grade buyers out there, hoping to strike gold with CGC grading. We sell mostly "raw" books, so see this phenomenon frequently. Right now, *Spidey* #129 is the book of the moment. This book is sizzling! At recent shows in Boston, Philly and NY we must have been asked 40 times for the book. *Marvel Premiere* #15 is smokin', as is *Hulk* #141, *Marvel Spotlight* #5 and others from the early '70s that feature first appearances of characters who are rumored to be in movie development.

Higher grade earlier Silver Age books from pre-1965 or so have pretty much evaporated from the market, so the demand for those books is off the scales, especially the Marvels!

Golden Age books are steady, but slower than they should be, probably because so many buyers' focus is on Silver Age and Bronze. Also, Heritage auction house has been successful in presenting so much Golden Age material to the market in such a short span of time it has dampened the overall market. There are still popular areas, though, such as mainline DCs, especially Batman, Timelys, and titles that are cool and impossible to find, such as *Speed*, *Prize* and any Nedors.

Overall, the market has remained very strong and steady, even through the periods of economic uncertainty. This can only bode well for the future, 'cause when the economy recovers, we'll really be kickin'!

Some recent sales: *Spidey* #129 VF/NM $285, #129 VF $145, #129 VG $38; *Marvel Spotlight* #5 NM- $245; *Daredevil* #1 VG/F $425; *Avengers* #57 NM- 175; *X-Men* #35 NM/NM- $315; *Strange Tales* #120 NM- 225; *Hawkman* #11 NM $105; *Brave & Bold* #61 NM/NM- $175, #62 VF+ 85.

Doug Sulipa's Comic World

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Canada R5G 1B5

Harvey comics have been in big demand for the last six months. We had been unable to get a good stock for quite a while, so we paid a very high percentage of *Guide* to pick up a great collection of 2000 Harveys from the 1950s thru early 1970s. Although only VG average, there were many deep and near complete runs. We added them to our stock and onto our website. I thought we would now be well stocked for the next one to two years.

Suddenly we were swamped with orders, selling over 50% of that collection, plus much of our regular inventory along with it, all within a period of about 45 days. It seems there are some very avid Harvey collectors, who want to avoid eBay and buying issues one at a time. Low-grade copies often bring multiples of *Guide* on eBay. We had to charge 25-50% over *Guide* on all our copies, due to the high cost and difficulty of stocking them. This met with zero resistance, with the exception of those in VF or better condition.

Hot Stuff remains the most sought after title in the last few months. Fans who have completed their runs are beginning to collect back-up stories with their favorite characters in other titles. For example; Spooky back-ups in *Casper*, or Richie Rich in *Mutt & Jeff*, etc.; all square-bound giants remain in large demand and are very difficult to restock. These comics are always *fun*, and certainly worth a second look, for all those who fondly remember them.

Baby Huey, the Baby Giant (main series; 9/1956-10/1990) #2 G $26, #3 VG $33, #4 G $13, #5 G/VG $18, #6 G $9, #7 G/VG $12, #8 G/VG $12, #9 G $9, #10 G/VG $12, #11 VG $12, #12 G/VG $9, #13 VG $12, #14 VG+ $15, #15 VG $12, #16 VG+ $15, #17 VG $12, #18 VG $12, #19 VG $12, #20 VG $12, #21 G/VG $8, #22 G/VG $8, #23 VG $10, #24 VG $10, #25 VG $10, #26 VG+ $12, #27 VG+ $12, #28 VG $10, #29 VG $10, #30 G/VG $8, #31 VG $10, #32 VG+ $12, #33 VG+ $12, #34 G $6, #35 G $6, #36 VG $10, #37 G/VG $8, #38 VG $10, #39 G/VG $8, #40 G/VG $8, #41 VG $8, #42 VG $8, #43 G/VG $6, #44 VG $8, #45 VG $8, #46 G/VG $6, #47 G/VG $6, #48 VG $8, #49 VG $8, #50 VG $8, #51 VG $8, #52 VG $8, #53 VG $8, #54 G $4, #55 VG $8; *Baby Huey and Papa* (5/1962-1/1968) #1 G/VG $30, #2 G/VG $16, #3 VG+ $18, #5 VG $15, #6 G/VG $7, #7 VG $9, #8 (AD page out, o/w) VG $5, #9 G/VG $7, #10 VG $9, #11 VG $8, #12 G/VG $6, #13 G/VG $6, #14 G/VG $6, #15 VG $8, #16 VG $8, #17 VG $8, #18 VG+ $10, #19 G/VG $6, #20 G/VG $6, #21 VG $6, #22 FA/G $3, #23 VG $6, #24 G/VG $5, #25 G/VG $5, #26 VG $6, #27 VG $6, #28 VG $6, #29 VG+ $8, #30 VG+ $8, #31 FN $10, #32 VG+ $8, #33 VG $6; *Casper, the Friendly Ghost* (1st Series; St Johns Pub – Scarce Pre-Harvey issues) #4 (3/1951, also has a Baby Huey story)

FN $120, #5 (9/1951, last St John's Pub issue, FA/G but 5% of front cover missing at right edge) FA $39; *Casper the Friendly Ghost* (1st Harvey Series, 12/1952-7/1958) #10 (6/1953, scarce, 1st app Spooky) FA/G $24, #12 FA/G $12, #14 G/VG $22, #16 FA/G $12, #20 (1st app Wendy the Witch; 1st app Witch Sisters) G $29, #23 FA/G $9, #26 FA/G $9, #27 FA/G $9, #29 G/VG $16, #30 G $12, #31 G $9, #32 FA/G $7, #33 G $9, #34 G $9, #35 G $9, #36 VG $18, #37 VG $18, #38 (11/1955, early 3-Part Wendy app) G $11, #39 (12/55, 1st app Samson & Honeybun) VG $18, #40 (1/1956, 1st app Dr Brainstorm) VG $18, #41 (2/1956, 3-part Wendy app, 1st Wendy app on cover) VG- $15, #42 VG $15, #43 (2nd Wendy-c) G/VG $12, #43 G/VG $12, #44 G/VG $12, #45 FA/G $6, #46 (7/1956, 1st app Spooky's Girl Pearl, 3rd Wendy-c, 3-part Nightmare app) G/VG $15; *Devil Kids, Starring Hot Stuff* #1 VG $39, #3 FA/G $6, #4 VG/FN $18, #5 FN $22, #6 VG $15, #7 G $9, #8 VG $15, #9 VG+ $18, #10 VG+ $18, #11 VG+ $12, #12 VG $10, #13 VG+ $12, #14 G/VG $8, #15 G/VG $8, #16 VG+ $12, #17 FN/VF $22, #18 VG $10, #19 G/VG $8, #20 VG $10, #21 VG $8, #22 VG $8, #23 FN $12, #24 VG $8, #25 FN/VF $16, #26 FN $12, #27 VG+ $10, #28 VG $8, #29 VG $8, #30 G/VG $6, #31,VG $6, #32 FN $9, #33 G $4, #34 VG $6, #35 G/VG $5, #36 VG $6, #37 G/VG $5, #38 FN $9, #39 VG+ $7, #40 G $4; *Hot Stuff, the Little Devil* (10/1957 thru 1/1991) #2 (1st app Stumbo the Giant, G/VG, but 1/12th of back cover missing) FA/G $19, #5 VG $32, #6 VG/FN $25, #7 VG/FN $25, #8 VG/FN $25, #9 VG/FN $25, #10 VG/FN $25, #11 VG/FN $19, #13 VG/FN $19, #14 VG/FN $19, #15 VG/FN $19, #16 VG/FN $19, #17 VG/FN $19, #18 VG/FN $19, #19 VG $15, #20 VG/FN $19, #21 VG/FN $13, #24 VG/FN $12, #25 VF $33, #26 VG/FN $13, #27 (VF, but tape stain at staples at centerfold) FN $16, #28 FN $16, #29 VG/FN $13, #30 VG $10, #31 VG/FN $13, #32 VG/FN $13, #33 VG/FN $13, #34 VG/FN $13, #35 VG/FN $13, #36 G $6, #37 G/VG $8, #38 FN $16, #39 VG/FN $13, #40 VG/FN $13, #40 G $6, #41 FN/VF $18, #42 VG $8, #43 VG $8, #44 VG/FN $10, #45 VG $8, #46 VG $8, #47 VG/FN $10, #48 VG $8, #49 VG $8, #50 VG+ $10, #51 VG/FN $10, #52 G/VG $6, #53 VG $8, #54 VG $8, #55 VG $8, #56 VG $8, #68 FA/G $3, #70 G $5, #71 G/VG $6, #74 G $5, #80 G/VG $6, #83 G $4, #85 FA $2, #86 FA/G $3, #89 VG $6, #90 VG $6, #91 G/VG $5, #92 G/VG $5, #93 VG $6, #94 VG $6, #97 VG+ $7, #100 FA $3, #101 VG+ $7, #105 VG $6, #113 FN $8, #116 FA/G $3, #118 G $4, #119 VG $6, #120 VF $10, #121 G/VG $4, #123 G/VG $4, #124 VG $5, #125 G $3, #127 G $3, #130 G/VG $4, #131 VG $3, #132 G $2, #133 FN/VF $5, #134 VG $3, #135 VG $3; *Hot Stuff Sizzlers* #3 VG/FN $21, #4 VG/FN $22, #6 FN+ $26, #7 VG/FN $16, #8 VG $14, #9 VG/FN $13, #10 FN $19, #11 VG/FN $12, #13 VG $10, #15 VG $10, #16 VG $10, #17 VG/FN $13, #18 VG/FN $13, #19 VG/FN $13, #20 VG $10, #21 FN $12, #22 FN $12, #23 FN $12, #24 FN $12, #26 FN/VF $16, #27 VG/FN $10, #28 FN $12, #29 VG/FN $10, #30 VG/FN $10; *Little Lotta* #4 FA/G $9, #6 G/VG $12, #8 FA $6, #11 FA/G $5, #12 FA/G $5, #13 FA/G $5, #15 FA/G $5, #16 VG $12, #17 FA $4, #22 VG+ $11, #24 G/VG $7, #25 VG $9, #26 G/VG $7, #28 VG $9, #32 FN/VF $19, #33 G/VG $7, #34 G $5, #35 FA $3, #36 FA/G $4, #37 (FN/VF, but tape stain on centerfold at staples) FN $12, #38 VG $9, #39 (VF, minor magic tape) FN $12, #40 FN/VF $18, #41 FN/VF $16, #42 (VF, minor magic tape) FN $11, #43 (VF, but tape stain on centerfold at staples) FN $11, #44 G/VG $6, #45 FA/G $3, 49 VG $8, #50 FA/G $3, #52 G/VG $6, #53 G/VG $6, #54 FA/G $3, #62 (ad page out) FA/G $1.50, #65 VG/FN $6, #67 VG $5, #68 FN $8, #70 G/VG $4, #72 G $3, #74 (Ad page out) FA/G $1.50, #75 FN $8, #76 G/VG $4, #77 G/VG $4, #78 G $3, #79 VG $5, #80 VG+ $6; *Little Lotta in Foodland* #8 (no back cover) FA/G $3, #9 G/VG $8, #11 G $5, #12 G/VG $6, #15 VG+ $10, #16 G/VG $6, #17 G/VG $6, #19 G/VG $6, #20 G $5, #22 FA $3, #23 G $4, #26 FN/VF $12, #27 FN $8, #29 FA $2; *Little Lulu Four Color* #165 (10/1947, name on cover) FN+ $135; *Little Lulu* (Gold Key Pub) #169 VG $8, #171 G $5, #180 VG $8, #184 G $5, #185 G/VG $6, #187 G/VG $6, #193 FN $12, #205 VG $5, #206 VG $5, #208 VG+ $6, #209 VG $5, #210 VG $5, #235 VF $8, #238 VG $4, #240 FN/VF $6, #245 FN $5; *Little Lulu* (Gold Key/Whitman) #246 VG/FN $4, #247 VG/FN $4, #248 VG/FN $4, #249 VG/FN $4, #250 VG/FN $4, #251 FN $5, #252 VG $3, #253 VG/FN $4, #254 FN/VF $6, #255 VG/FN $4, #256 VG/FN $4, #257 VG/FN $4, #258 VG/FN $4, #259 VG $3, #262 VG $3, #263 VG/FN $4, #264 G/VG $2, #265 VG $3, #266 (scarce) VG $6, #268 (scarce) G/VG $5.

Little Lulu Giants: *Little Lulu Tubby Annual* #2 (1954) VG $49; *Lulu & Tubby in Alaska* #1 (1959) G/VG $19; *Little Lulu & Tubby in Hawaii* (*Dell Giant* #29, 1960) G/VG $16, *Lulu & Tubby in Australia* (*Dell Giant* #42, 1961) G/VG $18; *Little Lulu & Witch Hazel Trick 'N' Treat* (*Dell Giant* #50, 1961) G/VG $16; *Little Lulu & Tubby at Summer Camp* #5 (1957) VG $25; *Little Lulu & Tubby Halloween Fun* #6 (1957) VG $25, *Dell Giant* #23 (1959) VG $23.

Spooky (11/1955-9/1980) #1 FN $125, #1 (magic tape repairs inside spine of cover) FA/G $39, #2 G/VG $35, #3 VG $29, #4 (looks VG, magic tape repairs inside spine of cover) G $16, #5 G/VG $22, #6 G $16, #7 FA/G $12, #8 G/VG $22, #9 G/VG $22, #10 FA/G $12, #11 G $10, #12 VG+ $21, #13 VG $18, #14 (G/VG, but 2 panels cut out of joke page) FA/G $7, #15 VG/FN $23, #16 VG+ $21, #17 FN $25, #18 VG+ $21, #19 FN $25, #20 G $10, #21 G/VG $9, #22 G $7, #23 G/VG $9, #24 VG+ $15, #25 G/VG $9, #26 VG $12, #27 FN $18, #28 VG+ $15, #29 G $7, #30 VG $12, #31 G/VG $9, #32 G $7, #33 VG $12, #34 (advertised centerfold pages out, stories complete) G $5, #35 VG/FN $16, #36 G/VG $9, #37 VG $12, #38 VG $12, #39 VG $12, #40 FN/VF $25, #41 FA/G $4, #42 VG $10, #43 VG+ $12, #44 G/VG $8, #45 G/VG $8, #46 VG $10, #47 G $6, #48 VG $10, #49 VG $10, #50 VG+ $12, #51 (1/1961) FN/VF $20, #52

FN $15; *Spooky Haunted House* #1 G/VG $6, #2 FN $9, #3 G $4, #4 VG $6, #5 VG+ $7, #6 VG $4, #7 G $2, #8 VG $4, #10 FN $6, #11 G/VG $3, #12 VG $4, #14 G/VG $3, #15 G $2; *Spooky Spooktown* #3 FN+ $35, #6 VG $16, #8 VG $16, #9 FN $23, #10 VG+ $19, #12 VG+ $12, #13 VG+ $12, #14 FN $15, #15 VG $10, #16 VG+ $12, #17 VG $10, #21 FN $13, #23 VG $8, #26 FN/VF $16, #29 FN $13, #32 FN $13, #61 VF $8; *(Marge's) Tubby Comics* (Dell) #1 FC#381 (VG, but 5% of first page missing) G $22, #2 (FC #430) G/VG $20, #4 (FC#461) G $14, #5 G $12, #7 VG+ $20, #9 FA/G $7, #10 G/VG $12, #11 VG $12, #12 VG $12, #13 VG $12, #14 G/VG $9, #15 VG $12, #16 G $7, #17 G/VG $9, #18 G/VG $9, #19 G $7, #21 G/VG $8, #22 VG+ $12, #23 G/VG $8, #24 G/VG $8, #25 VG+ $12, #26 G/VG $8, #27 G/VG $8, #28 G/VG $8, #29 VG $10, #30 FN $15, #31 G $7, #34 VG+ $12, #35 VG $10, #36 G $7, #37 VG+ $12, #38 G/VG $8, #39 VG+ $12, #40 G/VG $8, #42 FN/VF $20, #44 FN $15, #46 FN $15, #48 FA/G $5, #49 VG $10; *Wendy, the Good Little Witch* #2 G/VG $16, #3 VG $18, #4 G/VG $14, #5 G/VG $14, #6 VG $15, #7 VG $15, #8 VG+ $18, #9 VG $15, #10 (VF, but tape stain at centerfold near staples) FN $22, #11 G/VG $8, #12 VG $10, #13 VG $10, #14 VG+ $12, #15 G/VG $8, #16 VG $10, #17 VG $10, #18 G/VG $8, #19 VG $10, #20 G/VG $8, #21 G $6, #22 VG $110, #23 G $6, #24 G $6, #25 G $6, #26 VG $10, #27 VG+ $12, #28 VG $10, #29 G/VG $8, #30 G/VG $8, #31 VG+ $10, #32 VG $8, #33 (ad page out) G $3, #34 VG $8, #35 VG+ $10, #36 VG+ $10, #37 VG+ $10, #38 G $4, #39 VG+ $10, #40 VG+ $10, #41 VG $8, #42 FN $12, #43 VG+ $10, #44 VG $8, #45 FN/VF $16; *Wendy Witch World* (#1-45 are all Giants) #1 (1963) VG $32, #2 VG $18, #3 VG $18, #4 VG+ $21, #5 VG+ $21, #6 G/VG $10, #7 VG $14, #8 VG+ $17, #9 VG+ $17, #10 VG+ $17, #11 VG $10, #12 VG+ $12, #13 VG+ $12, #14 VG+ $12, #15 G $6, #16 FN $15, #17 G/VG $8, #18 G/VG $8, #19 VG+ $12, #20 VG+ $12, #21 VG+ $9, #22 G $5, #23 FN $12, #24 FN $12, #25 VG+ $9, #26 VG $7, #27 FN $12, #28 FN $12, #29 VG $7, #30 FN $12, #31 FN $12, #32 FN $12, #33 FN $12, #34 VG $7, #35 FN/VF $15.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

The Naiman Report

[continued from page 76]

$4370; *Richie Rich* #1 NM- $5635, #2 VF+ $805; *Richie Rich Dollars & Cents* #1 VF/NM $690; *Richie Rich Millions* #1 NM- $1035; *Richie Rich Success Stories* #1 NM $977; *Sandman* #1 MT $1207; *Shadow* (1973) #1 NM/MT $299; *Shazam* (1973) #1 NM/MT $218; *Showcase* #4 App. VF $2185, #9 FN/VF $1897, #9 VG- $891, #10 VG/FN $506, #13 FN+ $891, #15 FN $632, #17 FN $690, #18 VF/NM $1092, #19 VF/NM $1150, #34 VF/NM $2990, #38 VF/NM $448, #52 NM #402, #53 NM+ (Pacific Coast) $977, #60 NM+ $2070, #60 NM $1092, #61 NM+ $1207; *TV Casper and Company* #1 VF/NM $126; *Weird War Tales* #1 NM $603; *Wendy the Good Little Witch* #1 FN/VF $258; *Wendy Witch World* #1 NM- $402; *Witching Hour* #1 NM $414, #1 NM- $195; *Young Allies* #1 NM+ (San Francisco copy) $57,500, #2 App. VG/FN moderate rest. $356, #4 VF $2760, #14 App. NM- $575, #15 NM "D" copy $2530, #18 NM "D" copy $2530; *Young Men* #25 FN/VF $460.

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A shout-out to long time collector Bruce Ellsworth (discoverer of the Salida Collection). Seems as if Mother Nature decided that Cousin Brucie should have a four-way heart bypass the week before San Diego! He's healing and will have a zipper-chest just like Arnold! Notice how the FX folks made it disappear in *T3*? Best wishes from everyone here in SD and see you next year!

Greatest Comic Book Ever

[continued from page 14]

Sweeney and Son and always that required text story which enabled them to send the comic book through the mail. There was also a double-page ad section for stamp hobbyists, and usually the back cover had the Johnson Smith & Co. ad page ("Throw Your Voice," "Hypnotize Your Friends," "30 Shot B-B Pistol" ads). For three cents you could buy a 604-page catalog!

These comics were published by Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 149 Madison Ave., New York, 16, NY. I knew even then that New York must be a wonderful place! Hollywood, California ran a close second place!

Another time I discovered *King Comics*, *Tip Top* comics, *Comics on Parade* and *Famous Funnies*. These were all comic books made up of old newspaper comic strips. It was years later that I learned the first comic books ever were made up of newspaper strips and that it was when the companies ran out of material that they began to hire writers and artists to create their own titles with characters they could own (royalties had been paid to syndicates for the use of their comic strips).

Of course I also started clipping out current 1940s newspaper strips and kept them in scrapbooks; a hobby which lasted 35 years! I still recall my dear mother saying, "Sheldon, why do you do that? I don't see other children doing that!"

by Michelle Nolan

For Many Heroes, Titles, Life Began at 40

There were essentially only two types of comic books in that wonderful—and wonder-filled—year 1940.

Historically, of course, it was far from a wonderful year. Much of America was still feeling the lingering effects of the Great Depression, not to mention the politically and socially divisive influences Americans endured as World War II raged on in both Europe and Asia.

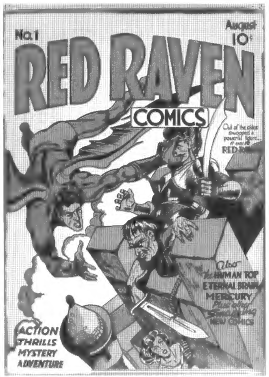
For comic book publishers, though, 1940 was the year sales of super-hero comics exploded even though newspaper reprint titles remained profitable.

Most of the ever-growing army of super-heroes in comic books did not yet battle Axis villains, even though frequent hints of foreign threats already were starting to appear, nearly two years before the attack on Pearl Harbor. In fact, though many Americans today look back and see a unified America during World War II, at the beginning of 1940 many citizens still debated the wisdom of taking on Hitler and Hirohito.

American children, though, did not argue whether to buy comic books. They snapped up those 10-cent, 68-page beauties by the millions. The number of total comic books published more than doubled in 1940, from only 322 issues with 1939 dates to 697 issues in 1940.

In all, 109 titles were published in 1940, plus the early *Four Color* and *Large Features* runs from Dell and the Single Series set from United Feature Syndicate (UFS). Of these, no fewer than 87 titles were entirely or primarily dominated by original super-hero themes, essentially unrelated to the newspaper reprint titles which began the industry only a few years earlier (thanks to Dan Stevenson for the database statistics).

Many collectors today, though, don't realize how truly different the comic book racks looked in 1940 compared to the way they would look less than a decade later.



Kirby cover on this Timely one-shot, the numbering continued as **Human Torch** #2, also 1940 (Fall).

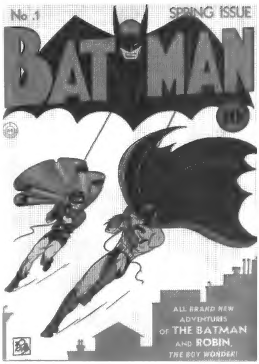
Eight of the best-selling titles remained in the realm of reprints—*Ace*, *King* and *Magic* from David McKay, *Popular* and *Super* from Dell (Western), *Famous Funnies* from Eastern, and *Comics on Parade* and *Tip Top* from UFS. In addition, Dell's *Crackajack Funnies* was still partially a reprint title. These nine titles quite likely sold a combined total of more than two million, maybe three million or more, copies per month.

These reprint titles are largely curiosities today. They are period pieces of Americana, often worth less in low grade than they were 30 years ago, considering inflation. When fandom began in the 1960s, though, many middle-aged collectors eagerly sought out the reprint titles.

The first cracks in the reprint market were beginning to show, however. McKay failed with *Future Comics*, which lasted only four issues in 1940. UFS published only two issues of the other UFS titles, *United* and *Okay*, also one-shot efforts in 1940.

Otherwise, one-shot failures were uncommon in 1940, both from major and minor publishers. From the little guys there were *Colossus* (Sun), *Green Giant* (Funnies, Inc., a title that never achieved general newsstand circulation) and *Hi Spot* #2 (Hawley, in between *Red Ryder* #1 and 3). From the big folks were *Red Raven* (Timely), *Special Edition* (Fawcett) and *Rex Dexter of Mars* (Fox). National's *World's Fair 1940* was a companion to the 1939 issue, but wasn't really a one-shot in the sense the others were. Except for *Hi Spot*, a potpourri title, the rest of the one-shots were among the few early failed super-hero attempts.

So, what else was available on the newsstands besides costume heroes and newspaper reprints in 1940? Precious, precious little. Astoundingly little, in fact. It's stunning to realize how one-dimensional the market was. Perhaps in part because the newspaper reprint titles covered so many genres, readers otherwise had a choice only of the following at least partly original 1940 issues: *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #1-3 and *War Comics* #1-3 from Dell; *Mutt and Jeff* #1 from All-American (National's affiliated half); *Sky Blazers* #1-2 (a radio show adaptation), *Red Ryder* #1 (also essentially a reprint title in its early days) and *Hi Spot* #2 from



Batman was in full swing by the time of his first self-titled issue (Spring 1940).

Hawley; *Sport Comics* #1 from Street and Smith; *O.K.* #1-2 from the obscure Hit Publications; and the large-size *Best* #3-4 from Standard, an experiment that failed.

That was it. No crime, no horror, no romance. Funny animals had not yet really emerged and neither had war titles.

In the wake of the success of Superman and Batman, the second half of 1939 began the surge of super guys (no gals yet, other than *Jumbo Comics* starlet Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, who qualifies as a costume heroine in my book). By my count, 90 issues published with 1939 dates from ten different companies were full of folks leaping and falling all over each other, each trying to outdo the other in energetic feats of the fantastic.

I haven't counted precisely, but in 1940 alone there were well over 90 costume heroes, both major and minor, who made their debuts. As noted above, fully 87 comic book titles—more than 80 percent of the entire market!—were packed with their adventures.

Landmark titles and the debuts of major characters absolutely abounded in 1940. Every month, the newsstands were packed with innovation and surprises.

Let's look at a few of the goodies now worth big, big bucks: *Adventure* (with Hourman's debut in #48), *All-American* (with Green Lantern's debut in #16 and The Atom's debut in #19), *Batman* #1, *Big Shot* #1 (with the under-rated and wonderful Skyman); *Blue Bolt* #1, first issues of Fiction House's *Fight*, *Jungle* and *Wings*; *Flash Comics* #1, *Green Hornet* #1, *Human Torch* #2 (really #1), *More Fun* (with The Spectre and Dr. Fate), *Pep Comics* #1, *Shadow Comics* #1, the *Special Edition* (Captain Marvel one-shot); first issues of Standard's *Thrilling*, *Exciting* and *Startling Comics*, *Target* #1, and *Whiz* #1 (listed as #2).

Never again would so many new super-heroes hit the newsstands in one year. On the other hand, the only highly significant non-super-hero comics to debut in 1940 were *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, *Red Ryder* and *Mutt and Jeff*.

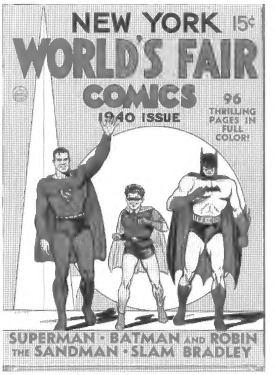
MLJ's Shield isn't especially well-remembered today, despite several revivals, although the Archie folks—apparently trying to take advantage of the surge in patriotic sentiment—recently issued a highly cool reprint volume of his eight earliest adventures. But in 1940, The Shield, in *Shield Wizard* #1,, was the first unabashedly patriotic hero, an original concept that beat Captain America to the stands by 14 months.

The most important super-hero—at the time—to debut in 1940 was unquestionably Captain Marvel. Only the oldest Baby Boomers remember the last gasp of the original run because the Big Red Cheese faded into limbo when Fawcett went out of the comic book business in 1953, with a final few issues dated January 1954. Captain Marvel started slowly—his own title didn't begin until 1941—but Fawcett's franchise character quickly made up ground on Superman.

In fact, my guess is that during World War II, Captain Marvel, bolstered hugely by his great serial in 1941, was at least as much a household name in American children's pop culture as were Superman or Batman. In fact, by 1942, *Captain Marvel Adventures* was a monthly (as was *Whiz Comics*), whereas both Superman and Batman appeared only bi-monthly in their own titles.

Republic's *Captain Marvel* serial, released in March 1941 even before the comic book character truly took off, is fondly remembered as perhaps the greatest of all chapter plays, re-released and revived many times and noted for state-of-the-art special effects and equally memorable stunt work by the great David Sharpe. Flash Gordon fans will dispute the point, if only because their hero appeared in three memorable serials—all with the best serial villain of all time, Charles Middleton's portrayal of Ming the Merciless—but Captain Marvel was grounded on the screen until his television appearances in the 1970s.

In retrospect, though, the heroes with



Superman, Perisphere and Trylon, the Boy Wonder.

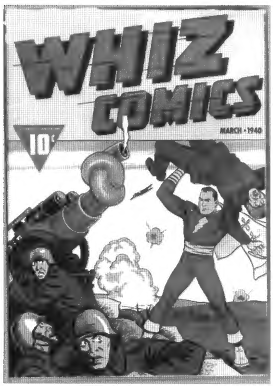
by far the greatest long-range impact introduced in 1940 were National's Green Lantern and The Flash (and, to a lesser but still meaningful extent, Hawkman). Their revived and revised versions emerged as DC's Silver Age linchpins. Had they failed, there would have been no successful Justice League of America, and in turn Marvel's Fantastic Four may not have emerged.

I still find it mind-boggling that Aquaman and Green Arrow survived the Golden Age superhero purge as back-of-the-book characters for DC throughout the 1950s—and that the minor-league likes of Johnny Quick and The Vigilante lasted until 1954—while the original Green Lantern, The Flash and Hawkman did not make it past *All Star* #57 (Feb/Mar 1951).

It's also intriguing to note that certain costume heroes who originated in other media—pulp stars The Shadow and Doc Savage and the radio sensation Green Hornet—first made their way to comics in 1940, joining the super guys who made their debuts in 1939—Batman, Human Torch, Sub-Mariner, Dollman, Blue Beetle, Amazing Man, Green Mask, Shock Gibson, The Flame, to name several of the most memorable comic-book originals.

In 1940, to a degree they never would again, costume and super-heroes absolutely owned the newsstands, especially if their brothers in the pulps are also considered. To steal a perfect phrase from the estimable Bill Schelly, there was, indeed, a Sense of Wonder.

An August, 1940, one-shot. Looks to be about 500 caliber.



How often do you see **Whiz** #3 (second issue, April 1940) reproduced? Still a 1940, button placket Captain!

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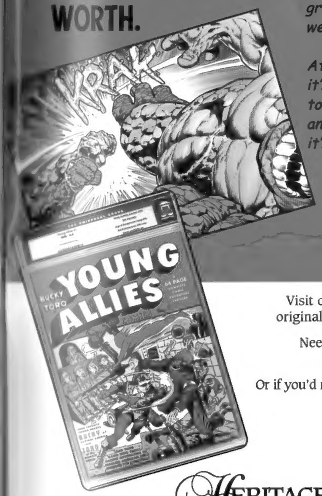

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